

A Complete Novelette; A Dozen Short Stories; A One-Act Play

The SMART SET

*A Magazine of
Cleverness*

In This Number

James Stephens

James Branch Cabell

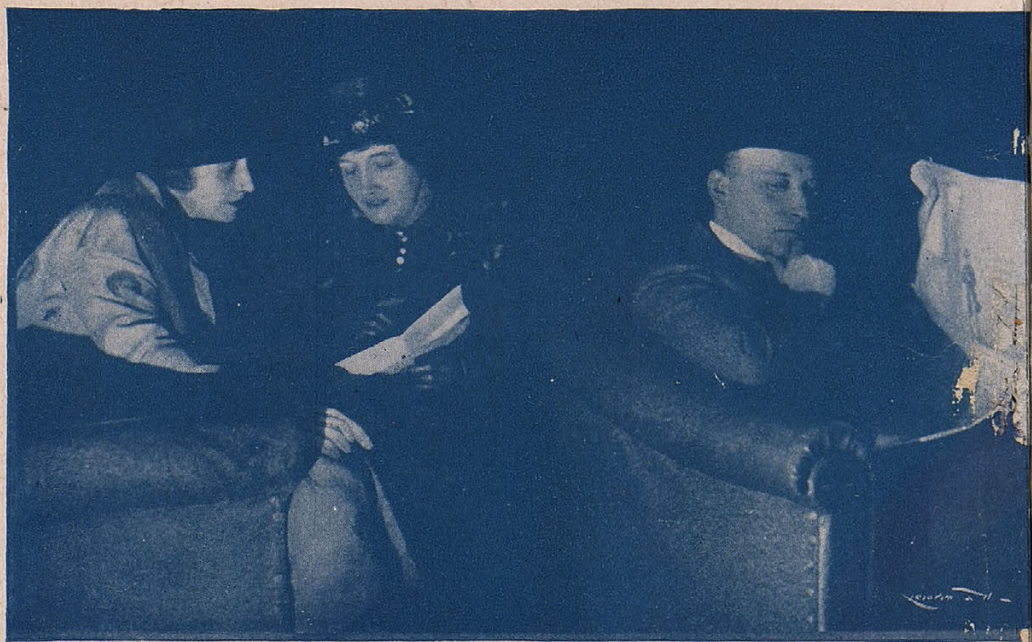
E. L. Grant Watson

Sherwood Anderson

Lilith Benda

July, 1918

Clayton Kopp
25 CENTS



Spies and Lies

German agents are everywhere, eager to gather scraps of news about our men, our ships, our munitions. It is still possible to get such information through to Germany, where thousands of these fragments—often individually harmless—are patiently pieced together into a whole which spells death to American soldiers and danger to American homes.

But while the enemy is most industrious in trying to collect information, and his systems elaborate, he is *not* superhuman—indeed he is very often stupid, and would fail to get what he wants were it not deliberately handed to him by the carelessness of loyal Americans.

Do not discuss in public, or with strangers, any news of troop and transport movements, of bits of gossip as to our military preparations, which come into your possession.

Do not permit your friends in service to tell you—or write you—"inside" facts about where they are, what they are doing and seeing.

Do not become a tool of the Hun by passing on the malicious, disheartening rumors which he so eagerly sows. Remember he asks no better service than to have you spread his lies of disasters to our soldiers and sailors, gross scandals in the Red Cross, cruelties, neglect and wholesale executions in our camps, drunkenness and vice in the Expeditionary Force, and other tales certain to disturb American patriots and to bring anxiety and grief to American parents.

And do not wait until you catch someone putting a bomb under a factory. Report the man who spreads pessimistic stories, divulges—or seeks—confidential military information, cries for peace, or belittles our efforts to win the war.

Send the names of such persons, even if they are in uniform, to the Department of Justice, Washington. Give all the details you can, with names of witnesses if possible—show the Hun that we can beat him at his own game of collecting scattered information and putting it to work. The fact that you made the report will not become public.

You are in contact with the enemy *today* just as truly as if you faced him across No Man's Land. In your hands are two powerful weapons with which to meet him—discretion and vigilance. *Use them.*

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION

8 JACKSON PLACE, WASHINGTON, D. C.

George Creel, Chairman
The Secretary of State
The Secretary of War
The Secretary of the Navy

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AND

BURLESQUES, EPIGRAMS, POEMS, SHORT SATIRES, ETC.

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Issued Monthly by Smart Set Company, Inc., Printing Crafts Bldg.
Entered at New York Post Office as second class mail matter

Eltinge F. Warner, Pres. and Treas.

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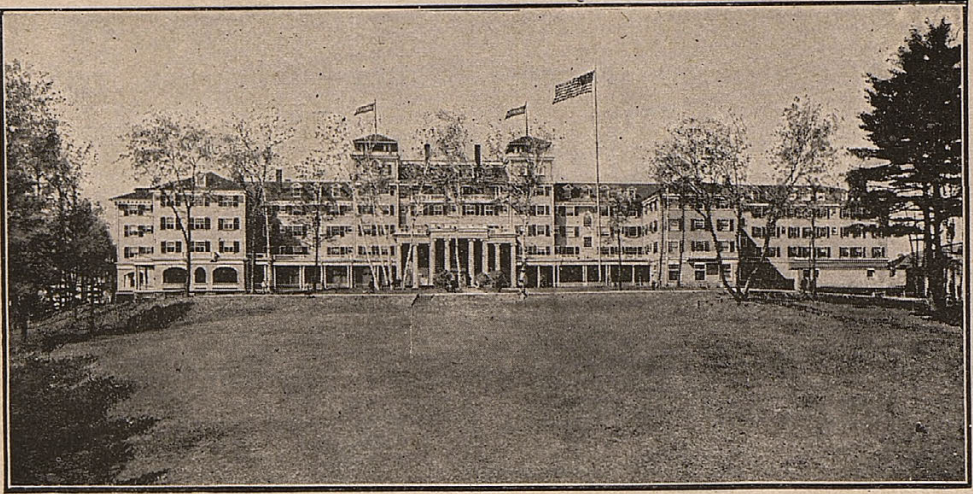
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The SMART SET

THE WAIL OF A POETICAL PURITAN

By Margaret Boyd

I LOVE roofs. I should like to live in a Washington Square studio with large open-eyed windows commanding a boundless view of them—a vista—an endless succession, with here and there, rising like a tall ghost out of the void, the outlines of a great gray skyscraper. I love the tall chimneys, the water-tanks and the clothes-lines—the dear, dim clothes-lines—where white garments dance joyously in the breeze like little souls released from pain . . .

I love roofs, and yet I realize that the air down-town is much less pure than in upper Broadway or the Bronx, and one should live as near a vacant lot as possible in order to conserve one's health.

I should like to sleep near the roof with my thoughts—my pastel, pellucid thoughts—in an attic so still that one could hear the snowflakes falling from space in winter, and the wandering leaf as it taps the pane in autumn. I should love to live on cheese and long, narrow loaves of bread and write poetry in free verse and be unappreciated. . . .

But I know that such places are uncomfortable and unsanitary, and I am

instinctively clean and neat by nature; and cheese, though rich in protein (which I need), has too much density to agree with me.

I love cigarettes. I like to blow out little rings and watch them ascending . . . slowly . . . slowly . . .

And soon my pastel, pellucid thoughts ascend with them, too . . . slowly . . . slowly . . .

But after the second one I open the window and change the air in the room, and remember that cigarettes are bad for the nerves, tummy and teeth, and that the habit is a vile and unladylike one.

I love the wine of Bacchus. The juice of the crushed white grape sings a little song of life to me when the bubbles rise and burst in the wine cup—a song of joyous life . . .

I love the poisonous yellow cocktail, with its single color-note of olive green, and the exquisite coral of a sloe gin fizz fascinates me. . . .

Yet I am well aware that alcohol, even when taken in moderate quantities, impairs one's efficiency 20%, and even if one escapes its pernicious ef-

fects oneself, one should always be careful to set a good example to others by abstaining from it in any form.

I love thin, clinging garments. . . . Sometimes at night I lie half-clad in a smock of pale sea-green on heaped-up cushions in the dim light of flickering candles. . . . The incense in the copper burner mounts in a long, thin, curling line. . . . With a movement of languid grace I stretch my arm and bid the slave girls cease playing on their zithers. . . .

And then, shivering, I arise and put on my flannelette nightgown and set the alarm clock and go to bed, for late hours are bad for the health, and one should be up betimes in the morning in order not to fritter away the golden hours of the day.

I should like to have a bad man love me. I alone would mold his career and shape his destiny—ah, that's what I want! . . . to shape the destinies of men!

But in doing it I should like to keep the respect of all, and be treated as a lady, and I should resent any jesting or vulgar remarks about my reputation.

These are my secret adorations and ambitions—and yet I am handicapped by my cowardice; enslaved by my common sense. I have the body of a serpent and the head of a college professor: I have the desires of a dancing-girl and the respectability of a school-teacher: I have the soul of a Russian and the conscience of a Presbyterian. . . .

What am I to do?



SONG FOR PARTING

By Margaret Lyster

I MUST not see your face, your feet, your hand;
For I must speak and you must understand.
In my free-hearted day I gave to you
The foam of waves—and waving fields—the blue
Night-lanes of Spring,—I begged, my Sweet,
The falling stars to worship at your feet,
The mid-day sun to veil himself from you.

I gave you love, and what I thought was truth
And oh!—the half of life—my rapturous youth.

And I can give no more—these days are done.
No sea shore pebble—no, not one,
Nor rain of vaporous blossoms from the tree,
Nor yet my heart with all its misery.
Gay-girdled Spring his fragile way has run.
Can you, Belovéd, recognise
What I have lost and won?
Oh, answer me—and hide your eyes—
Your wondering blessed eyes!



THE INAUGURATION OF BRIDA CREELE

By Lilith Benda

I

"**N**OR would it be smooth sailing for old Malone. You're too headstrong a creature for him, dear."

"To Larry Malone I'm a shrinking and exemplary young girl."

"You won't do it. You couldn't trick the poor old ass so. You couldn't take his money and his name—"

"When it comes to a situation like this, I'd take everything but the initiative."

They were standing at the edge of a bay, speaking in hushed voices. It was that breathlessly still hour of night that just precedes the break of gray dawn. The figure of the man was lost among the shadows of great pine trees, and the girl, in a wet swimming suit, seemed no more than an impression of white liteness swaying beneath the stars.

"You won't do it," he repeated.

"And why not? Because he's old and silly? Because he's your father-in-law? Because I'm a year younger than his daughter, than your wife? How about Father and Mother? They're all worn out, all dog-tired. When the house goes, am I to drag them to the city, and eke out a living there? It's got to be done. Let's not discuss it. . . . Moreover, once done, I mean to play square. But it's not done yet!" She laughed very softly. "Tomorrow he's taking me to meet his mother. Tomorrow I've an idea that troths will be pledged."

"Tomorrow night I'll not meet you here."

"Oh, but you shall, Skipper!" She

darted toward him, and slipped her arms about his neck. "And tomorrow you're not to frown so sanctimoniously when I kiss you. . . . I must go now."

"Brida!" As if unwillingly he caught her hand. "You who've lived all your life on this island, you who've been cloistered for nineteen years—what's given you your uncanny insight, what's made you the highstrung young witch that—"

"Do you remember," she interrupted, leaning her head on his shoulder, "when we went sailing six years ago, how you used to laugh, and say I had quite a future ahead of me? Well, for six years now I've been waiting here, learning things, thinking things over, and figuring things out, and storing up conclusions, and making plans. Now I'm ready—ready for all I'd like to do, for all I'm going to do. I believe—" Abruptly she withdrew her hand, and darted out to the water-edge—"I believe I'd like to make a fortune, or have the world at my feet, or something. And I believe I shall. I'll be an actress, or a singer, or write high-flavored memoirs, or—but that can all wait. Life's too much fun to waste much of it in accomplishing things."

She ran out into the water, little splashes mingling with the lilt of her laughter, until only her head could be seen, scarce distinguishable in the darkness. "Until tomorrow night!"

"I'll not be here."

"Oh, but you will, dear!" A white arm was flung into the air, as if in salute, and she was swimming with long, even strokes across the bay.

II

MRS. CREEL was frying porkchops. With indomitable loftiness of manner she manipulated the slices of meat, her vacant eyes gazing out over the sizzling pan into the harbor of Cohagua Island, still sunset flushed, and a silvered violet in the mistiness of midsummer twilight. A shabby ferryboat was puffing its way between Point Creel and Point Noxon, the extreme ends of a sort of horseshoe of land formed about the little bay. And what with the sough of waves and wind, and the salt savor of the sea, what with fishing smacks at anchor, gulls swooping from opalescent clouds to silver-shot wave crest, and the tumble-down shacks of the fisherfolk dotting the shore, it was difficult to reconcile Cohagua Island with a half-hour's sail across the bay, and an hour by rail to the city, more difficult still to bring it into any sort of compatability with a twentieth century civilization.

For over the place there lingered an atmosphere wherein all the charm of the antique blent with all the quaintness of the obsolete. Mrs. Creel smiled faintly as she gazed through the open window. This was exactly the spot which a vigilant parent might choose for the training of offspring, secure against the onsets of worldliness, in the old-fashioned manner. Even a dapper yacht, moored among the sloops, seemed to shrink diffidently away, as if aware that it was an incongruity, only overshadowed by the glaring, blatant incongruity of a great house built high on a hill overlooking the bay—a presumptuous house, an upstart, an impostor among houses, a house mock-Tudor in style, and flaunting without shame its parvenu opulence upon an old world tranquillity, the home of Lawrence Malone, pickle potentate, and but recently a resident on the island.

Cohagua Island had its celebrities. On the doorsteps of their shacks the fisherfolk still discoursed upon the advent of Larry Malone, and the return of Keith Noxon, last of a long line of

Noxons, to the ancestral manor house, centuries old, which tradition associated with a hidden treasure, and a family ghost, and a race of engaging dare-devils who on adventure bound, sailed away from the steps, now cracked and moss-covered, of the old water gate.

For six years Cohagua Island had seen nothing of Keith Noxon. A young man who graced only intermittently the home of his ancestors, and then to figure in nocturnal carouses at the island tavern, hazardous cross-country gallops, and sails through gales with a little dark-haired girl, who laughed at each onslaught of wind and wave, beside him—"wild Miss Brida," the fisherfolk called her to her mother's discomfiture—abruptly he had ceased his visits, and started, so rumor had it, his heritage dissipated, his creditors clamorous, upon a series of ill-fated adventures projected to bring the world to his feet.

And rumor had it, too, that he had come to a sorry pass, what with high-flavored peccadilloes of sentiment, and debts hemming him in on all sides. At any rate, it was generally conceded that he had crossed paths with old Larry Malone at the very crux of events.

Quondam stevedore, Lawrence Malone, by some whimsy of fate, had drifted into control of a vastly lucrative piccalilli and chow chow industry. A widower with only one child, it was his habit to pamper this daughter, to gratify her every whim. And Larry Malone's daughter had smiled upon Keith Noxon, with the result that his debts were paid, the manor house renovated, the mock-Tudor atrocity built on the hill, and after a six-year interim he returned with a bride to the home of his fathers, while old Larry Malone brought an octogenarian mother to play chatelaine over his new domain.

Cohagua Island had its celebrities. Long before Larry Malone had arrived on its shores, long before Keith Noxon set out on his adventures and Brida stirred comment with her capriciousness and wayward beauty, there had been Augustin Creel. On Point Creel,

directly opposite the manor house, stood a dwelling formidable in its air of haughty decrepitude like a reminder of the eternal futility of things flung in the face of upstart flamboyancy, on the one hand, and traditional grandeur on the other. It had a dog-tired look, yet withal a something regal in its ramshackledom. Smoke curled from its chimney, and melted disconsolately away without enough energy to rise to the clouds. And in the kitchen Mrs. Creel was standing over her porkchops.

At one time Augustin Creel had been the only illustrious personage on Cohaquia Island. "Gas conveyors—gas retorts." When they discussed the little inventor's successes the fisherfolk spoke in voices lowered in respect to the same degree that they became shrilly derisive at mention of his latest contrivance, "My gas for heating houses, generating electric light and power—a new gas, fuel gas, a new standard of gas. . . . Era-making, revolutionary, epochal! You'll see!" The little man expounded his invention to no matter how beef-witted a willing listener. For reckless extravagance and years of sloth had wrought havoc on Point Creel. The family treasures had been relegated to the auction rooms, the family servants dismissed. And Brida had begun with her "I will act," "I will write," "I will sing," "I will marry"—hazy, chaotic plans to recoup the family fortunes that had culminated, just when matters were at their shabbiest, with the courtship of Larry Malone.

Events of moment were hanging in the air at this close of a midsummer day. In the first place, an heir was expected shortly at Noxon Manor. Within a month, too, the mortgage on old Augustin Creel's house would be foreclosed. But outweighing all else in significance was the fact that Larry Malone had motored to Point Creel that afternoon and taken Brida to meet his mother—Brida Creel, who was just nineteen, a year younger than his daughter, Brida Creel upon whom the pickle king had been lavishing devotion ever since the day he had stood

beside Keith Noxon, watching a storm from a boat-landing, and stirred to curiosity by a sudden gleam in his son-in-law's lazy eyes, had turned to behold a girl bringing her catboat to port in the teeth of an ugly gale that set loose the masses of her jet-black hair, a girl in a scarlet sweater, a girl with eyes of that vivid blue which lurks in flames, with a chin held very high, with lips that curled, and cheeks that crimsoned at the sting of the spray, and the whip of the wind.

A dull purple had crept to the pickle king's forehead at the sound of her full-throated "Ahoy!"

III

THE shabby ferryboat emitted a squeaky whistle as it came to port. Mrs. Creel removed her porkchops from frying pan to serving platter, placed them with an air of grave deliberation in the oven, and turned again to the window, the great, flabby folds of flesh that hung dejectedly about her, like an alien substance, quivering in grotesque fashion at her every step, and yet quite failing to obliterate an effect of dignity, of grandeur even, in the set of head and shoulders, in the tranquil gaze of dull eyes that lighted a little at sight of a stoop-shouldered man who was trotting jauntily up from the boat-landing.

A woman of some fifty years, she walked with a painful wobble that hinted at varicose veins. Her every breath was an asthmatic wheeze. And to the firm-set mouth there was a disconsolate twist, as if she were incessantly fighting a proneness to indulge in a martyr rôle which pride forbade. Hers was the face of a being with a birthright to the fag-end of things, a baffled, bruised face always with an expression of polite dismay upon it. It was a face that betrayed tendencies, thwarted but still in abeyance, to play lady bountiful to the Cohaquia colony, grace the star pew of the village church, be the rector's chief pillar, read Jane Austen by the hearthside, play Mendelssohn in duet form, work late into

the night on her daughter's bridal finery, or her grandchildren's christening robes. Not an extraordinary face. A face, indeed, that became downcast at the mention of the word "extraordinary." Augustin Creel was an "extraordinary" man. And hardly had she accustomed herself to the vagaries of genius that upset her life, and divested her home of heirlooms and servants, than followed the vagaries of her "extraordinary" daughter.

For Brida Creel, at nineteen, exhibited few of the logical developments of a cloistered youth. To her beauty there was an intangible something, a something intense, extreme, that made for unmaidenliness. Uneasily the mother sensed attributes dangerous, and heady, and alien hovering about the girl. Uneasily she frowned upon a fluency of speech, a proclivity for puzzling terms which had often sent her to the dictionary, only to come away even more dismayed at what she discovered there. That look of polite dismay on Mrs. Creel's face had deepened gradually from the days when a little girl laughed at her commands, and went sailing with Keith Noxon in the ugliest of weather, to these days when Brida slipped into her swimming suit at dead of night and swam out over the bay, to return just before dawn.

Mrs. Creel gathered up some battered silverware and wobbled to the dining-room. Here, too, there emanated an effect of regal ramshackledom. The great chairs were carved in chaste design, but springs sagged, and upholstery was ragged. Damask portières seemed to deplore the ignominy of their frayed edges, even as contentedly they harmonized with the brilliant blues and golds that offset the shabbiness of the room just beyond. For in the library great sheaves of goldenrod and corn flowers filled a dozen cracked vases and chipped pitchers. Some light-hearted insurgent had evidently stacked the flowers about the room, the same insurgent, perhaps, who left open books scattered upon a couch, and pages of music strewn over the floor.

Mrs. Creel's wheeze became louder as she bent her back to restore the paper sheets to the music rack. But a soft look had crept into her eyes, and it deepened at the sound of shuffling footsteps on the porch.

A moment later Augustin Creel came through the doorway, his every step an attempt to inject devil-may-care jauntiness into a sort of hopeless shambling of his whole being. A small-boned little man with a cherubic face somewhat weak of chin, and sagging of muscle from which a pair of great, child-like blue eyes shone, he seemed always to be assuming a bravado air, and stood shifting from foot to foot, hemming and hawing apologetically. His wife laid a custodial hand on his shoulder.

"Well, Mother—" A nervous hem.

"How are things, Augustin?"

"Coming along, coming along, Mother." The feeble body became tense. "Heating houses with my new gas. . . . Gigantic enterprise! You'll see."

A fly had settled on his forehead. It was at one with his gasconade that flinging his hand up into the air as if with one blow to extirpate a legion, he ended with a little, shy flick at the insect. And there was a suggestion of a whine in the faint "Era-making" that followed.

The custodial grip on his shoulder became a soothing pat. "Brida is having tea with Mr. Malone, and he is returning here for an informal family dinner."

"Ah!" He fixed his gaze upon his wife. And his eyes reflected the same fervid hope that gleamed from hers. "He could back my fuel gas—"

"And pay up the mortgage," she just breathed.

"Ah! Hem!" Twisting his fingers, shuffling his feet, he went on: "Of course our Brida must not pledge herself unless she genuinely wants to. Couldn't allow that. . . . And moreover, no necessity. A great fortune in my fuel gas!" Again the fly settled on his forehead. Again the preliminary flourish, the diffident flick, and a puny

fury to his vociferation. "That winged pest ought to be exterminated—positively exterminated!"

"Er-er-hem!" he went on after a moment. A smile lit the pudgy face as at the visualization of something ineffably precious. "Our Brida is—is extraordinary."

Mrs. Creel winced at the word. "Exceptional, rather—exceptional." All at once her mouth began to twitch, and the great folds of flesh spasmodically to quiver. An unwonted agitation battled with her stoicism. "Augustin, I'm worried! My baby—she's wandered away from me. . . . This isn't what I wanted. Years ago when she was a little girl, and went sailing with young Noxon, I used to dream. . . . And yet Mr. Malone is a good man. If only she would confide—but she's wandered away from me. . . . Augustin, this tearing around the island, this strange talk that I can't understand, this running out at midnight for a swim! It all terrifies me!"

"Hm! Ha!" The little man fidgeted uneasily. Perhaps, it's not altogether fitting that a young girl of nineteen should—"

"But he's a good man, Augustin."

"I don't want to think that she may be doing it for us."

"He'll make a good husband."

"If she really wants to, there's no reason—"

"And a good father. A good family man. Of course, if she doesn't care for him, I wouldn't have it for worlds." Vaguely troubled she looked about at the worn furniture at the shabby walls. Her voice became a mumble. "He'll pay off the mortgage!"

"And he'll back the fuel gas!"

Shamefaced, unquiet, and yet both ecstatic in the great uprolling swell of a new hope, the two faced each other. Her hand still rested on his shoulder, and she looked at him with a certain stern sweetness as at a repentant child, shifting there from foot to foot before her. A deep violet shaft of light played over them, and so engrossed had they become with a halcyon vista that they

started guiltily when footsteps sounded from the porch, and a clear, young voice with a peculiar bell-like timbre, rang out:

"Ahoy there!"

Almost on the instant, Brida Creel appeared in the doorway.

IV

SHE stood poised, tremulous, breathless on the threshold, her great blue eyes, like dancing cerulean flames, roving about the room, and fixing themselves, finally, in a look of steadfast candor upon her mother. A quality of auroral incompleteness emanated from her, as if she were not quite at the brink of things, but pushing aside every obstacle from her path, all eager for the plunge. And her magnificent self-assurance, the superb carriage of the tall, slim figure, the effect of sovereignty over all pearly skinned, fine fleshed, long-limbed, fleet-footed creatures, all proclaimed a being born to the panache, and attem with impatience for an intangible something that hovered tantalizingly near. Heady, buoyant, quicksilver, her every feature betrayed a fervid zest for existence, a tremendous energy about to run riot. The little nostrils dilated, the big eyes roved restlessly, the lips, of a very vivid crimson, were curled in anticipation, the chin held high above a long white throat that pulsed with each rapid breath. She threw off her hat, and in the mirror blackness of her hair deep, burnished hues appeared to scintillate, like radiations of an inner glow and colorfulness.

"Settled!" With a dramatic flourish, she displayed a jewel, sparkling on her hand. "All settled! And the bridegroom-elect awaits felicitations in the hallway."

"My little girl!" A preliminary wheeze, and Mrs. Creel wobbled toward her to bestow the benedictory embrace. "Now life is beginning for you, and—"

"Yes, yes, I know," the girl broke in. In the face of her parents' uneasiness she displayed a very manifest relish for

an amusing situation. One arm thrown about her mother's neck, the other resting on old Augustin's shoulder, she went on: "But I must tell you something funny. You know—or don't you?—how my pickle-king grinds out his r's, how he roars 'R-r-rats!' all the time. Well, under the pressure of an emotional onrush, under the spell of my—my amorous allure—"

"Your what, Brida?" Mrs. Creel interrupted nervously, "Your am—"

"—orous allure. Don't look it up, darling. I just meant that under the pressure of an emotional onrush, his r's become w's. His famed piccalilli is pungent with spicing, but his wooing has a flat flavor. . . . Mildewed ardor! Erotomania in camphorballs! His r's become w's, you see. When I received the betrothal kiss, 'What a lovely fwock,' he murmured. And on the way home, at the first hug, 'It looks like wain, Bwida.' . . . Odd how such things affect a man. Odd that a remark about the weather should turn my thoughts to boudoir frocks, discreetly diaphanous, and befitting the consort of a pickle king."

"Brida!" By a supreme effort of will, Mrs. Creel covered the dismay on her face with an expression of genteel rapture, as Larry Malone, impatient at the delay, strode into the room. A gaunt, freckled, raw-boned man, with a long nose, and a fringe of sandy beard embellishing his receding chin, there was something about him which suggested an old and inoffensive bearded vulture. He smiled a diffident smile, fumbled at his necktie, blew his nose.

"My dear Lawrence!" With dowager dignity in her wobble, Mrs. Creel approached her prospective son-in-law. Old Augustin, meanwhile, was nodding his head, and shifting his feet, intent upon the renown he saw before him. Brida patted his puffy cheek. "It will be era-making, dear," she whispered. And then, her glance chancing to drift to the window, to the bay, to Point Noxon and the old manor-house, slowly her eyelids drooped, until just a little of the blue gleamed out—a blurred blue

now, a tender, smouldering, sensuous blue. Rhythmically her head began to sway from side to side. The little nostrils dilated.

V

THE dinner progressed smoothly. Mrs. Creel looked about the table with pride, and dallied with her porkchop as if it were a morsel of grouse. Hopes for the lady bountiful rôle approached fulfilment—plum-colored brocade, silverware for the buffet, a fifty-dollar corset. For when Larry Malone's eyes fell on disfigured wall-papers and frayed portières, it was with a glance that promised improvements on a vast scale. Manifestly he had a passion for improvements. In his droning voice he expatiated upon the improvements effected at Noxon manor, the improvements under way for all Cohagua Island. His improvements were a favorite topic that lost interest for him only when his thoughts turned to the efforts of his daughter—"the colleen," he always called her—to bring Noxon around.

"Ranged around the world a whole lot, that fellow," he announced. "You know him, don't you, dear?"

Brida's face assumed an absent-minded look. "I used to go sailing with him when I was a little girl. I used always to call him my skipper."

"Well, it's hard for a man like that to settle down. But now that the—the—well, you know, the little anchor is expected, I guess that'll bring him around all right."

Mrs. Creel's face beamed with a gloat for gossip. "I hear that the trained nurse has arrived. And that you've engaged a specialist from the city. . . . She's young and strong, she'll come through beautifully. And if she'd like me to, why I'd be only too delighted to be at her side through the ordeal."

Old Augustin was squirming at the turn the conversation had taken, "Brida if you've finished your coffee, sing that 'Samson and Delilah' thing for me."

The girl rose at once. In a moment

from the farther end of the room there came a little wicked, elfin strain of music. She played it again and again until her father's face wrinkled in a perplexity that vanished when finally a rich soprano, powerful, untrained, and with the same bell-like quality her speaking voice possessed, broke into the popular cantabile. She sang it through hurriedly, finished with a discordant bang on the piano, paused to glance through an open window at the lights of Noxon Manor that shone through a heavy mist, and returned to the dining-room, humming the aria.

Her betrothed, immune to the wooing of melody, was conversing with her mother. "Nobody—" and he struck the table heavily with his clenched hand—"Nobody can play old Larry Malone for a sucker."

Brida stopped her humming. "How nice! How awfully nice it must be to feel that way." Her eyes were intent upon the sandy stubble at his chin. "I would like—do you know, I believe I'd like to write a play, and play in it myself, and make a fortune. Play a Delilah without malice or cruelty who cut her Samson's hair out of sheer curiosity, just to see if—if anyone could play him for a sucker after all."

A shade of uncertainty blent with the shy reverence on the pickle-king's face, at her feverish laugh. He fumbled with his necktie, blew his nose. "I want you to meet the colleen soon, Brida. I want you two to be friends. She's a good girl. And why not? I gave her a good education. Convent, you know—Dominican Sisters. She paints on china fine, and you should see the altarclothes she's embroidered."

"How nice! - How awfully nice. . . . I can't sew."

"But she can write," Mrs. Creel broke in nervously. "And she could pick up sewing if she wanted to. You must see the prize compositions I've kept ever since she was twelve years old."

"Great! Great!" Benevolently he patted the girl's hand. "There's a tower room in my house with a fine

view of the bay. I'll have it improved, all fixed up so you can write there to your heart's content."

"How nice! How awfully nice of you!"

A clock struck ten. Under the tabletop, Brida's hands were folding and unfolding. Her eyes were lowered in apparent reverie, and yet the tranquil attitude failed quite to conceal an inner expectancy, a watching, a waiting, a furious impatience that intensified when her father, who had shambled unnoticed from the room, returned with a vast heap of plans and specifications in his arms, and a radiant hope in his eyes.

The hands of the clock moved relentlessly on while he explained his fuel gas. "A gigantic industry! Revolutionary! Epochal! Millions in it! All planned out, too, all tested, all ready to have a company formed. I've figured it out even to the stationery—pearl gray, pebbled paper, with 'The Universal Gas Company in old English type for a heading. . . . Era-making!'"

His eyes moistened with delight at Malone's dubious "There may be something in this." And he rambled on and on, until the clock struck eleven, and half-past, while under the table cover Brida's fingers were tearing a handkerchief to shreds.

At last, out of breath and ecstatic, the little man gathered his papers together, "If you'll excuse me, I'll go upstairs, and figure out something new. Feel in the mood—in the mood. Afflatus, you know."

It was no more than a signal for Mrs. Creel to bring forth a treasure box she had placed conveniently near. "Little souvenirs of my girl's childhood."

Brida's eyelids drooped a trifle further. She was tearing the shreds of her handkerchief into little pieces, and letting them fall to the floor. But a collected air concealed her agitation, and she even ventured an occasional "How nice!" while her mother was displaying the treasures. Brida's school compositions, Brida's diploma, Brida's

one Bible class prize, Brida's photographs at sixteen, at ten, at five, at two, Brida's first hair-ribbon, Brida's christening robe, Brida's baby-shoes, all folded carefully away in scented wrappings, all tied with faded ribbons. There was hardly a trace of dismay now on the woman's face. The asthmatic wheeze attained an almost joyous sibilance.

The clock struck twelve, and then the half-hour. Very gently Brida leaned her head against her mother's shoulder, but a tremor ran over her, and there was pleading in the laughter that interrupted a discourse upon kindergarten days. "Mother dear, isn't it getting late? This has been a strenuous day and poor Larry has to go to the city early in the morning."

Mrs. Creel retied a last bow, returned a last package to the treasure-box. Her head wagged roguishly. "I know, I know. Time for an old woman to disappear, and leave you two to say good-night. . . . I've old-fashioned notions, but don't believe in too much chaperonage once troths are pledged." And she arose laboriously, began to waddle from the room, always with a jocose wagging of her flabby chin.

"No, no, dear—not that!" The girl started after her, but stopped short before the benign smile on old Malone's face; stopped short, and started forward again, interrupting the adieux her mother was sending from the hall with a whispered "Now his r's will become w's, dear."

And yet there was no dismay in response. Mrs. Creel was in a halcyon glow. The chin still wagged. So that Brida at last, nonplussed, discomfited, turned back, and with the pickle-king close at her heels, walked into the library.

VI

MRS. CREEL mounted the stairs ponderously, painfully. Her footsteps resounded in the upper hall, rattled the chandelier as she passed into the room overhead. There was a smothered thud, the protestant creak of a rocking

chair, then quiet. . . . And between the affianced an embarrassed silence prevailed.

Brida, at length, turned to the piano, picking out with one finger little snatches of the impish air which had perplexed her father early in the evening, while in antiphony the wind wafted through the open window a faint, faraway strain of music—some humdrum song softened, mellowed by the distance into a barbaric croon, which the bolder spirits among the fishermen sent echoing from their tavern across the island. The girl's eyes widened in delight. Over the long throat her head swayed lazily to the measured beat of the music. "I like that. . . . Usually unspeakably obscene, the things they sing. But I like it—all indistinct in the distance. . . . a jumble of syncopated asterisks. I like—"

"Needs improving." Larry Malone's husky voice drowned her whisper. "Improving. This place needs improving. The fishermen ain't a bad lot, but they need improving. That saloon's got to go. Lid's got to be shut down tight where my two gals live."

A spark of malice shot from her eyes, but only to enhance the witchery of this creature, all teeming youth, all tiptoe expectancy, all fevered anticipation, and impatience, and eagerness, all blithe surrender to a something which sent its clarion summons in the sounds of wind and sea—this alien creature who regarded her betrothed so inscrutably through lowered lashes.

A long silence followed while he stared at her, a little hurt, a little uncertain, as if with each instant he became more acutely aware of that crass uncouthness which seemed, before this girl, so malevolently to drench the very essence of the man. A purplish flush suffused his face. "Maybe"—his voice had a broken note—"maybe—well, it don't seem right somehow, your hitting it off with an old one like me. Maybe—"

"Oh, no, no!" She broke in, as if wrenched from a spell by the dreary prospect his abdication from the post

of improver to the Creels implied. From overhead came the creak of a rocker, dulled into what sounded like a smothered, frantic beseechment. "I will try to make you a good wife," she finished lamely. But her eyes, fixed upon his for an instant, wavered back to where through the mists the lights of Noxon Manor gleamed. . . . A distant cry came from the fishermen's tavern, another vague echo of music.

"A big, rough fellow like me hitting it off with such a young thing. It don't seem right." Like ugly little smears the freckles stood out against the purplish red of his face. About his mouth the muscles were working. He shuffled toward her, took out his handkerchief, blew his nose. "I'll give you everything I have, of course. Everything in the world. My money, my life, everything in your little hands, but—oh, rats!—it don't seem right. You—"

She was looking at him now rather gently, rather understandingly. He appeared desperately to fumble for an appropriate word to bridge the chasm between them, bootlessly to pursue a poetic tribute, until by degrees a triumphant grin overspread his features. "You are standing with reluctant feet where the brook and river meet—oh, rats!" as she leaned a little away from him.

"You—" Suddenly his great hand shot out, passed roughly over her face as if in a frenzied effort to blot out all the beauty that enthralled him there, and lingered, the freckled fingers spreading themselves proprietarily over the fair flesh, tousling her hair. "With—" His voice was thick and guttural. "With reluctant feet where the brook and river meet."

"Ah!" A spasmodic movement away, and she was arranging her hair, her face filled not so much with aversion as with a terrific eagerness to have done with a tiresome burlesque. The clock struck. She started. "Is that one or half past?"

He made no reply. His eyes, following hers, stared out at the ancestral

home of the Noxons. One last light shining from an upper room was extinguished while they watched. "The colleen—she's asleep, and may the saints guard her." He smiled a twisted smile that put a touch of sombre, Celtic sadness on the dull face, which was like a stubborn heritage, strange, and lyric, and incongruous to the general composition of this stevedore who had become a pickle king. "My two gals! The colleen and you! I hope she'll be happy. I think she'll bring him around. If anyone—" A stern strength threw back the slouching shoulders. He raised a big fist high above his head. To the gesture there was a weird grandeur which transformed the man. "If anyone was to harm either one of my two gals, I'd—I'd—"

Before the alarm on Brida's face the unuttered menace became a diffident laugh. "When the baby comes, that'll bring young Noxon around. That'll make him settle down. Can't realize that my colleen is going to have her own little one. Funny to think of her as a mother. Funny to think of anyone young, and—and pretty" . . . Approvingly he scanned the fine young form before him. All unconsciously his face lighted, as if he were visualizing issue to make proud the heart even of a pickle king. A flood of color to Brida's cheeks reflected itself in the deepening of the purple tints on his face. Mindful of amenities which forbade too protracted a visit, on this, the betrothal evening, he turned away, but, unfortunately, to fix his gaze upon an engraving on the wall which pictured a group of youngsters frolicking beneath the languishing smiles of a young matron. . . . A discomfited laugh, a wave of his awkward arm toward the picture. "They are winning welay waces."

"Weally?" It came from Brida in an explosive half sob, half laugh. Immediately, to cover her confusion, to still any misgivings her railery might induce, she slipped her hand into his, drew him a little toward her. And yet

when clumsily he took her in his arms there was a rigid backing away of her whole body which left him panicstruck. "It don't seem right somehow. Brida, are you sure you want to take this step?"

The trouble on his face intensified at her abstracted nod, and meeting it, an alertness seemed to settle over her. Overhead, Mrs. Creel's footsteps resounded, each thud an unmistakable plea. The girl looked about the dingy room, which seemed to symbolize a dingy destiny, imminent, and to be warded off by no matter how ignoble an expedient. Through the window came the night wind, intriguing, enticing, and the aroma of the sea with its exhortation to have done with absurdities, and answer an insistent summons.

She rose from the piano, bringing to bear a histrionic aptitude to still doubts, to restore his dampened ardor, and speciously to palliate a precarious juncture. She smiled an insipid smile, approached him with mincing footsteps. Playing a part, but playing it too well to arouse suspicion, she threw her arms about his neck, buried her face against his shoulder with just the proper dramatic flourish, just the proper note of uncontrollable abandon. . . . "Fwen-zied finance!" The whisper was lost in his coat-sleeve.

"What's that you said, dear?"

"I said—" Slowly she raised her head, to meet the twisted smile so oddly at variance with the general complexion of the man. In a trice every vestige of dissemblance fell away from her. She smiled in response, a smile whose sweet mockery blandished, whose light compassion comforted. "I said that I'd play square, Larry Malone—in my way."

All silent reverence he released her.

"And thank you, Larry, for all you are doing for me—"

"Oh, wats!"

"And all you're doing for Father and Mother."

"Oh, r-r-rats! That's nothing."

Distinctly from overhead came the

indignant snort of bedsprings at an inordinate burden, Mrs. Creel's discreet reminder that this colloquy must not be unduly prolonged. The pickle king adjusted his tie, blew his nose. "Getting late. Better be going. I'll see you tomorrow, my dear."

Brida followed him into the hall, in her eyes just the proper wistfulness, in her good-night kiss just the proper maidenly fervor. "Chilly night for summer," he mumbled. "There's a high wind."

"And a choppy sea."

When the door closed upon him, she stretched her hands above her head, abask in a sense of deliverance. Then she sped up the stairs, tearing open her collar, unfastening her bodice, all exultant surrender to the impetus of her response to a clarion call.

VII

SHE had slipped the bodice from her shoulders before the top step was reached, and drew a comb from her hair as she sped past the room where Augustin Creel sat huddled over his drawings. Almost stealthily she tiptoed into the room her mother shared with her on such nights as the inventor gave himself up to lucubratory response to a divine afflatus. Silently, hurriedly, furtively she slipped out of frock and shoes. And her eyebrows twisted in anger when the regular wheeze from the bed became more hurried. In the dark the shapeless mound there stirred.

"Brida, dear."

"Yes, Mother?"

"Happy, dear?"

"Yes, Mother."

Mrs. Creel had remained awake to gratify a longing for filial confidences and incidental gossip. "Tell me, Brida: Mr. Malone's—er—Lawrence's mother, what is she like?"

The girl's quick laugh resounded. For all a breathless haste, she yielded to a passing sense of enjoyment. "My mother-in-law! Toothless, senile, a hag that would a lady be! Exhales

both an atmosphere of shady antecedents, and her pride in them. Militantly respectable! Says 'ain't' with an air. Uneasily respectable! Looks as if she weren't quite sure whether or not to be insulted when the butler calls her 'madam.'"

"Brida!" The exclamation was uncertainly remonstrant, as if, while not grasping the gist of the description, Mrs. Creel had no doubts as to its being "extraordinary." Through the gloom she watched her daughter draw off her stockings, unfasten a petticoat, let down the masses of hair that fell, jet black against the nacreous skin, to her waist, to her knees.

"Brida, dear!" There was unwonted insistence in the wheeze. A bedside confidence had been anxiously awaited. The girl, stifling an impatient sigh, opened a drawer, took something from it, and tiptoed, barefoot, across the room. The mother's impassive face almost beamed. She was ready with the maternal counsellings:

"Brida, my baby, this is the beginning of great things for you. I've been lying here thinking of my own young days. Life is opening for you like a flower to the dawn—I mean you're the flower, and life's the dawn—this is—I mean the dawn of life, you know." She wheezed more heavily, a little confused with her similes. "All the serious, sacred things lie before you. Wifehood, motherhood! I've been thinking of my grandchildren, lying here, and—oh, Brida! Oh, no, no, Brida!"

Her voice became an agonized wail, for, all smiles and attention to the maternal platitudes, Brida had been slipping a swimming suit over her shoulders during her mother's discourse. "You're not going swimming? At this hour of the night? Why, it's almost morning!" A great tremor shook the big body. Two bare, fat, shaking arms were outstretched, the hands flapping ludicrously from the wrists. A hollow sob sounded.

"There, there, Mother! There, there!" Alarm on the girl's face blent with the alertness she had shown a little

while ago, the terrible impatience, the necessity of playing a part. Her voice became soft, and low, and lulling. "Dear, it's my betrothal night, and I want to be alone for just a little while with the sea. Life is opening like a flower to the dawn, you know—"

"Brida," the mother interrupted, "my baby, is there anything wrong? Is there—is there someone else? Where are you going? Where do you swim to? Is there anything you want to tell me—or don't want to tell me? Anything I should know? Anything a mother should know?" The big face stared up, very frightened, and white, and blank. "I'd—I'd understand."

The words came as if wrenched from her, as if, dazed and bruised by the onslaughts of an "extraordinary" something she had striven bootlessly to fathom, she were making one last pitiful attempt to bridge an ever-widening gap.

"I'd understand." As Brida moved away, the mother sat up in terrible agitation, a ridiculous figure in her cotton nightdress, with a little tight braid of hair bobbing at her neck. "I'd understand."

Dimly she seemed to sense a bitter farce. All at once the whole fat, swollen, tired body began to shake, each flabby fold of flesh to quiver grotesquely. With a fierce gesture she caught the girl to her, clutched her greedily, drew her close, patting the flushed cheek, stroking the bare shoulder. "You've drifted away from me—my baby has drifted away! Everything's gone wrong. This isn't what I wanted! I should have made time so we could play duets together, and embroider, and confide—always kept up a beautiful relation. I shouldn't have let you read all those mad books! You've drifted away. . . . It's a terrible thing to find your baby gone from you, something holding her from you. Not a curtain—you could tear that away! Not a door—you could break that down. . . . An iron-barred gate, it's like an iron-barred gate that you can see through—there's the horrible part, you can see that

something's wrong, but you can't understand what. . . . And my baby—my baby won't even come close enough to—to shake hands through the bars!"

Brida threw her arms about her mother. The tears that had sprung to her eyes became a bond when they moistened a fat, faded cheek. . . . But through the window came the sound of the sea, always calling, always urging. And the night wind wafted an aromatic, caressful invitation. Her cheek, laid against her mother's, flushed, became feverishly hot. Her heart, laid against her mother's, began to beat more quickly, more loudly, until each violent throb was audible. . . .

All at once Mrs. Creel's agitated wheezes subsided. All at once the quivering ceased. All at once she released the girl from her embrace. She appeared to be listening, hazily reminiscent, to those heartbeats, and to the surge of the sea. She passed her hand across her face as if she still felt the cheek that had burned there a moment before, at the caress of a perfumed breeze. . . . All at once her composure returned, and she smiled in response to the smile of the girl who, although her eyes were still tear-laden, regarded her with a very tender mockery, and a compassion that comforted, like a hand-clasp through iron bars. "I'm playing square, Mother—in my way."

Stately, serene, Mrs. Creel raised her big hands to fasten a hook of the swimming suit which Brida had overlooked. "Run along, darling. I wouldn't understand."

Without another word the girl darted from the room. And all was quiet, save for a faint thud when the mother's head fell back on the pillow, a smothered creak of the bedsprings, and a tranquil, regular wheezing.

VIII

THE portico of the Malone mansion burst into radiance to proclaim the return of the master to his domain, while far in the distance a beacon light winked its signal of danger feebly

through the fog, like a crabbed mentor befuddled by a certain verdancy, a certain summoning to high combat that charged the air, and stammering an incoherent and witless warning. Heavy, low-hanging mists drifted incessantly, obscuring the sky, save when at intervals a venturesome star sent its roguish twinkles through the gloom. And with the vague croon of wind and wave, and the distant toll of a bell-buoy, there came a last echo of revelry from the fishermen's tavern. A high, sharp cry rang out. A snatch of song pierced the night with a rhythmic, throbbing aliveness, and seemed, as it melted away, to resolve itself into the faint laughter that resounded, when the figure of a girl appeared for an instant, only to merge with the mists, and plunge into the sea.

In and out among the moored fishing smacks, Brida Creel was swimming, her body no more than a lithe immateriality, a luminous shaft in the grayness of things. At each rapid stroke an eager young arm was flung high into the air, as if half in salutation to what awaited her in the pine copse at Point Noxon, half as a challenge to the beacon that flickered from the distance its squeamish warning. And as she came closer and closer to her destination, as first the jut of land became distinguishable in the murkiness, then a white bridge over the lily-pool, then the great pine trunks, and the straggling lacery of upper branches, she cut her way through the water with a sort of furious joy, as if superbly confident in pitting a high heart, a glad abandon against all puny, petty convictions so oddly concentrated now in the foolish winking of a beacon light through the fog.

At last she drew herself up on the moss-covered steps of the old water-gate. The wind whipped her swimming suit even more closely about the tall, slim form. She paused to wring the water from her great mass of hair, and all expectancy, peered into the darkness. In the poise of the uplifted head, in the proud set of the shoulders lay

a quality strangely virginal, and yet queenly and dauntless. Of a sudden she espied a figure coming toward her from the depths of the pine grove. There was a sharp intake of breath, a quiver, a great upward surge of the whole body. Then "Ahoy, skipper," rang her soft cry. "I knew you'd be here, and I knew you'd wait! I couldn't get away before."

One white arm shot high into the air, as if she were flinging a gauntlet full into the faces of the high gods, and in an instant she was beside him, her eyes blinking with delight, a moist, flushed cheek laid against his, while the long hair, full of a briny fragrance, fell over his shoulders, entangled itself in his fingers, and she uplifted lips curled for laughter, and fresh from the salt sting of the sea. . . . An air of world-weary indolence fell away from the man when he took her in his arms. His heavy-lidded gray eyes lost their chill. Faint lines about mouth and temples, lines of lazy aloofness and derisive unconcern, disappeared into the smile of one too intrinsically attune with the zest irradiate before him to check a ready response. And when he bent his head over the parted lips, straight through the mists a tiny, laughing star twinkled, for an instant, its commendation.

IX

THEY made their way then to the heart of the copse. Brida flung herself upon a carpet of silky pine needles, drawing him beside her. An admixture of fragrance from sea and pines, and box hedges, and water lilies, made for an atmosphere that lulled and wooed. Immeasurably distant came the toll of the bell-buoy, while a constant murmuring among the branches blent with hushed whispers and broken laughter.

In the quicksilver breathlessness of the girl's words and gestures there emanated a keen relish for this, an episodic situation, which reflected itself in the attitude of the man beside her—a dark, patrician featured man of some

thirty years, tall, rangy, lazy-looking, a man of race and pride of race, manifestly a sportsman and flaneur, manifestly an adept in the art of the on-looker and do-nothing. Impalpably the fine features revealed an inaptitude to cope with existence, a fastidious shrinking away from combat, a streak of alloy so slight as scarce to debase the finer metal. His face displayed at once the man who had made an expedient of Larry Malone's colleen to extricate himself from an awkward predicament, the man who sooner or later would be "brought around" to an exemplary post at the home hearth, and the man who had caused a girl's cheeks to burn, and heart to pound when the night wind summoned her to him.

For no world-weary air nor skeptical smile could conceal his restless hankering for that elusive loveliness of things which seemed incarnate in the loveliness before him. Between these two there was nothing of the frenzied transport, nor maudlin interchangement of vows, but an infinite gusto, and light-hearted ardor. It was only when his eyes chanced upon the beacon light winking so stubbornly through the gloom that he frowned. It was only when he took her hand, and saw the jewel glimmering there, that his lips twisted into a disagreeable smile.

"Oho, skipper!" The words came with a purling insouciance. "I'm to be your stepmother-in-law! All settled today! Isn't that funny?" But there was no smile in response, and Keith Noxon turned away from her.

The girl's lips drooped, but only for a moment, when, looking through the low-hanging branches, out over the sea, her head began to sway from side to side. "I like majesty. . . . The sounds of the sea, or an old master's sonata—majesty there! But do you know, there's a very terrible majesty in commonplace things, too? The sound of the sea, an old master's sonata, Larry Malone's big, freckled fist, my mother's wheeze, my mother's wobble—"

Shyly she outstretched her hand, but the man remained with averted face. A

spark of resentment shone in her eyes when again she looked out across the bay. In an upper room of the Creel house a light went out. "Father is going to bed. Nice of him to let us alone. I can hear him chuckling 'Era-making! Epochal!' to himself just to drown a certainty that he's at his lag-end, and get up spunk to flinch pluckily through another day. Nice of him to let us be. . . ."

"A very terrible majesty," she went on. "They exact obligation, inspire respect—Mother's wheeze and Larry's fist. Quite ordinary folk, and yet one hates to hurt them. And the strange part is that the more one hurts them the more they will have of that which exacts obligations and compels respect. I'm playing square, according to my way, and yet—" Her teeth dug into her lower lip. Perplexity wrinkled the smooth brow. She seemed struggling to arrive at a conclusion which only just evaded her, to seize upon a tenet hovering tantalizingly near. "A very terrible majesty, and yet—"

Of a sudden she had slipped into his arms, so abrim with invitation, the flushed, sweet face and parted lips that his sullenness fell away, and he caught her to him, proud to claim title to this ardor so freely proffered. Her mouth barely grazed his, and she sank her head a little until the lowered eyelids rested in turn against his lips. Then quickly she sat bolt upright, her eyes still closed, opened them very slowly, closed them, opened them, blinked in a happy wonderment that trailed off into laughter, into a ringing, jubilant cry. "And yet I refuse to go to my pickle king—unless you—unless you—!"

He released her so suddenly, so brusquely, not in anger, but as if prey to an overpowering fear, that she tumbled into a little heap beside him. "Can't you see"—the faintest hint of unsteadiness in the even utterance bespoke an inner torment—"can't you see that you'd better go now? That I really mean to have this end? That this is unquestionably the last meeting? You're lovely, dear, but there's a rank

taste to all this. All very well to smash ikons, but there are things at which even a reprobate balks. . . . Can't you realize that she's lying not very far from here, probably awake and thinking of the great event that is to bring me around? That after all the old Irishman got me out of a devilish mess, and he's getting you and your people out of—"

"This is no joust with moral issues!" All angry impatience, she broke in. "I have to marry him, of course. It's got to be done. If the shanty were to be lost, if that—it's got to be done. Well and good. . . . And on your part, Larry Malone has paid your debts. Well and good! Renovated your house, given you an income. There's an heir apparent, an heir imminent, rather—"

"The heir, Brida"—his long, strong fingers intertwisted until the joints cracked—"the heir is so abominably imminent just now." And in the hang of his head, in the droop of his shoulders, at the futile tug at his collar as if it were a halter that bound him against his will, lay so spiritless and suppliant a self-abasement that the girl caught her breath in quick compassion, leaned toward him, only to draw away again, intent upon the attainment of an ultimate aim.

"Quite a jaded old story, mine, isn't it?" she murmured at length. "Father an inventor, mother with a life of sorrow behind her, larder bare, mortgage on the homestead, sweet young thing to act the beggar-maid, and old King Cophetua to the rescue—to the wescue. . . . With the usual Prince Charming in the background, of course. Silly old story, but with a new twist."

Scarce had the words left her lips than she had moved with that startling suddenness which betokened a yield to the sweep of an inner elation, and was close beside him, her eyes sparkling into his. "Now have a care, Keith Noxon! For now I am going to play the siren. Now I am going to entice and ensnare you. Now I am going to Delilah you for all I am worth!"

She drew herself up to her knees,

and in her eyes, and smiles, and eager little nods, lay a witchery artless enough to soothe away all scruples. Little, limpid, broken strains of laughter escaped her, soft as the notes of a wood-pigeon's wooing. And gradually all trace of dejection disappeared from the man's attitude. His face lit in response to the ebullience exhaled.

"Do you know, Brida"—almost timorously he let his fingers run through the long hair that was drying now, and curling into soft tendrils at the temples and nape of the neck—"It's hackneyed homage, but I raise the bumper to the mystery of you! There's something about you which reduces me to blankness. I find nothing to quicken the senses in gray-green abstrusenesses. . . . No mystery in mugginess, but the crystalline inspires a sense of awe."

"And do you know," came her whisper as she nestled closer, "that what I like best about this episode is that it has the grandeur of enduring things? Love like ours will never die! I am all ateam with maidenly this-will-last-foreverness. . . . For I believe that all my life I shall love best men who are a little like you. Lazy, bored, charming men, men who are a trifle sad, men with nice, heavy-lidded, chilly eyes, men with ugly little lines about their mouths which I can make disappear, men—why, what's the matter?"

For he had winced, and recoiled guiltily at nothing more than a feeble light which was sent flickering from the Creel house. At his discomfiture the girl frowned. Her hand trembled ever so slightly. "It's only Mother. She's lit a candle to keep down the gas bill, and is sitting up waiting for me. . . . Why can't they leave us alone? Why can't they let us be? The home-lights guarding me from harm! The beacon warning of danger! Why can't they let us be?"

His eyes followed hers into the gloom which enfolded them, which seemed to curtain them off from existence. A sinister sorcery lurked in this grayness, lighter now, but thicker, slatier, a dismal herald of the break of

day binding earth and sea and sky in a strange intimacy charged with a strange significance. There was a suspension of all sound, the very murmuring in the pine branches but part of an impenetrable silence. Incessantly, stealthily the mists swam about, dipping, rising, gliding, slinking, tottering, scurrying, assuming vast, grotesque shapes, until it seemed as if an assemblage of spirit folk were skipping about on all sides, as if the high gods themselves had heard the intrepid defiance of a girl's melodious laugh, stirred their creaking joints, laid aside their statute books and descended to view without malice a woodland caprice, as if they held their breaths now, sympathetic, powerless to aid, abashed before the spectacle, inquisitive as to the outcome.

Brida's head lifted in ready zeal for combat. Through a short silence she appeared to be summoning every asset to bear upon the onsets of an insidious opponent, and then came the bell-like lilt of her voice. "They've been good to us, the Malones. They've gotten us both out of the nastiest kind of a mess, and in return we—we two, Keith, you and I, two such altogether nice persons as you and I—we're going"—she laid a finger against his lips to stifle any protest—"we are going to bite the hand that feeds us!" The faintest, gurgling laugh, and she was rumpiling his hair, twisting it into little curls at his forehead. "We're going to hoodwink the Malones, bleed the Malones dry, blot the proud pickle from the family 'scutcheon. . . . We're—we're going to play the Malones for 'suckers,' skipper! Just because"—she twined her arms about him, and lifted her lips for little nonsensical, thistledowny kisses on his forehead, on his temples, on his chin—"just because this is carnival time, dear! The world's at heyday, and I can't be bothered with rectitude and renunciation, and such stuff. Everything is in a breathless rush. There isn't time to ponder on right and wrong. . . . Carnival time, skipper!"

Now her lips barely grazed his, and

again she sank her head until the lowered eyelids rested in turn against his lips. Again she sat up quickly, opened her eyes, closed them, opened them, blinked in a delight that merged into the very softest of laughs, the very softest of whispers. "Carnival time!"

"Brida!" His voice was thick and shrill. "Try to understand, Brida. All the time you're talking, I can't help seeing that poor, little thing with the terrible hope in her eyes. Remember, she got me out of a nasty mess. Saved me from disgrace. I've got to leave you now. You understand, dear, don't you?"

But the girl's lips only curled. "Carnival time!" she whispered.

"And the old man," he went on, always with that strange, choking utterance. "Old Malone! You and my—you and his daughter are all he lives for. . . . It would only mean another rotten mess. And he's been so altogether decent, so—"

"Carnival time!" the girl broke in.

His eyes shifted furtively to the park so obviously "improved," to the bridge over the lily pool with its "improving" coat of paint, to the house, its "improved" outlines just discernible now, where a silly little soul was lying, perhaps awake, and hatching silly little plans to "bring him around"—shifted back to eyes that met his with glad serenity, to a head swaying rhythmically over a throat that pulsed with each rapid breath. The wind tossed a lock of hair, all aromatic of the sea, across his face. His fingers inter-twisted. Again the joints cracked. . . . All at once his hand shot out, just as had Larry Malone's an hour or two before, and covered her face, as if to obliterate the supreme assurance, the allure that enchanted there—and lingered, just as Larry Malone's hand had lingered, twining the little ringlets of hair in his long, strong fingers. . . .

He sprang to his feet, but on the instant she, too, had arisen, and swayed toward him, until at last he swept her into his arms so roughly that a gasp escaped her. She hung there, inert,

her head thrown back, the long hair dragging in the pine needles, and in her eyes a blue blaze of triumph. A blue blaze that gradually deepened to a tenderer tint, that became the veriest smoulder . . . until all at once her face went blank with fright and astonishment when abruptly he released her. With a shaking hand he was pointing to a light that had appeared in the tower-room of the Malone house.

Her laughter had a strained note. "Why the terror, Keith? It's only Larry Malone. He's not asleep. He's up there prowling, and dreaming, and planning. Up there in the tower-room that is to be fixed up for me to write in. I can hear him on the day he'll lead me there . . . 'Thanks? Wats! Isn't it westful? Do you like the wocker? Thanks? Wats!' . . . Oh, why can't they all leave us alone?"

For the first time something like a sob sounded, betokening not so much a dread of impending defeat as a slight discomposure of the serenity where-with she pursued an elusive tenet, and fought for the attainment of her aim. But immediately there followed, in the self-confident tilt of her head, a deft retrieval. Looking out over the bay, in the dip and rise of the mists, she appeared to sense an effect of immaterial beings looking on, of giant heads wagging in disappointment.

"Sometimes," she mused, "I think of a deity who started in to be a god of joy, a god of fauns and dryads, an artistic god who wanted only the respect of high-held heads, and got genuflexions, and lilies, and doves, and lambs, and crosses, and crowns of thorns until he sickened of his job, and became just a routine man with no eye for ensemble effects—"

"And no genius for details."

She turned, her surprise at his equable tones deepening when she detected in his tranquillized features a sense of liberation from a spell which, even as it awakened delight, involved too strenuous a battling with established standards and traditional codes not to confound this stroller through existence.

He was at ease now, took her arm, walked to the edge of the copse and back, relieved at his narrow escape from another "devilish mess," although still in a state of placid subjection. "The *leitmotif* pleases," she commented, "but strictly in *tempo commodo*. Poor skipper, you flinch at the *crescendos*, and *fortissimos*, and *furiosos*, don't you, dear? Well, we'll *moderato* then, just to obviate monotony."

And she walked beside him with a certain gracious aloofness, while her heavy hair fell about her face, and hid the mockery in her eyes, the serene resoluteness of her upraised chin.

It was becoming lighter every moment now. The deep greens of the trees began to stand out against the grayness. Bluish tints appeared in the sky, and in the distance a hint of rose-color crept over the horizon.

"Good-bye, Brida." They had walked back to the heart of the copse. He stopped short and took her hand. "Good-bye, Brida, and thanks for an interlude as troublous as it was beautiful."

He was the charming, tired man of the world now, courtly, gallant, a little jaded, perhaps, a little cantish with his phrases, a little regretful at the passing of this incident, and yet above all, relieved. "I want once again to raise the bumper to the mystery of you. It's crystalline transparency that reflects the wisdom of the ages. You've a gorgeous and chaotic future ahead of you. And I shall always be proud of having known you at the outset. . . . Forgive a spiritless response. Forgive—"

"The morning star!" she broke in. "Look! The morning star!"

She pointed to where, high in the heavens, radiating its little points of light, palpitant with white luminosity, it shone—the great, clear star of dawn—like a signal that invited to delight, that seemed by a supreme authority to have extinguished the light in the tower room, and the squeamish beacon, and the candle gleam at Point Creel. Brida pushed her hair back from her face. All tingling animation, she looked into

Keith Noxon's face, and broke into laughter, into irrepressible laughter, into trills, and tinkles, and roulades of glee.

"You're so wrong, dear! So all wrong! So absurdly, nonsensically all wrong! You're not going to leave me. You're going to—to catch the holiday spirit, skipper. Oh, there's a future ahead of me—true. I mean to have the world at my feet, and never to see it there for having my eyes lifted to some man on a pedestal before me! You're on the pedestal now. And this is the outset of everything for me. You're going to make it a glad, a beautiful outset. You're not going to cringe away, all scared and shaky, at the thought of another scrape. . . . You owe your living to Larry Malone. What difference does that make? And I'm going to marry old Larry Malone. What difference does that make? And Larry Malone's colleen is going to have a baby. What has that to do with the morning star, and melody in the air, and the beginning of everything splendid for me? . . . Look at me, dear, look at me!"

Meeting his uncertain glance, as if to instil some of her own serene assurance there, as if to formulate a supreme conviction, clear, ringing, exultant came her cry:

"Life's a trifle rancid, dear, but I mean to enjoy it so, just the same!"

She seemed to sing out the great conviction that swept all relevance from the sinister paltriness enmeshing these two—to sing it out in laughter that permeated her whole being, that harmonized with the sounds of a wind and sea whose vigor and freshness acclaimed theirs this carnival creature. All abrim with an auroral dewiness, she stood with high-held head beneath the great, white star of the morning, a figure valiant and virginal. She appeared to be pausing for just an instant longer before stepping over a threshold, to realize this an investiture into office, the starting point of a course of existence whose very richness in promise gave cardinal significance to its initial

episode. . . . An investiture into office accompanied by all the solemnity of a rite, and all the exhilarance of a revel. For all that has ever twinkled and teemed, all that has ever surged, seethed, sparkled, heartened, everything blithe, everything lyric, seemed for the moment epitomized in this girl.

Cheeks flushed, eyes bright, lips curled, with strange blues and greens agleam in the raven hair which the wind tossed high above her head, and a delicate iridescence playing through the milkiness of her skin, it was as if all the color a mouldy world scoffed were concentrated here, as if even the luminous pink that tinged the horizon now were radiating from her. And constantly the mists unfolded, receded, always with the effect of a senile scampering, like giant dotards nudging one another in furtive glee, ducking their heads in homage to this defier of their mandates, even as they dubbed her pariah, and scurried back to statute books that damned.

Combat ahead for this insurgent! And yet there was something martial about the sight of her standing there beneath the morning star, which augured victory, which suggested a crusader against all drab and outworn ideals, who awaited the fray eagerly, all cuirassed in laughter, and with her buckler the belief in an eternal joy of things. . . . No longer pleas nor invitation in her outstretched hands, but command and welcome. Keith Noxon advanced a step toward her. . . .

—Advanced one step, and stopped short. His jaw fell agape. His shoulders sagged. His hand fumbled at his collar, gave it a futile tug, and dropped inert to his side. A long shudder passed over him. He stared dead ahead, as if beholding an apparition at once opprobrious, pitiable, and all-powerful.

X

THE high gods, for all a covert sympathy, vouchsafed but a moment's triumph to a trampler of codes. In the distance, but outlined with marvelous

clarity, the unfolding mists revealed a little figure walking slowly at the water-edge, and gazing out toward the horizon—an unwieldy little figure in a silly, pink peignoir, that assumed, beneath the rose-gold tints of dawn, almost a symbolic significance.

It was as if day itself, orgiastic, exhilarant, breaking in a tumult of color, in a resplendent tribute to all light-hearted and laughter-loving things, were forced by some hostile agency to focus its brightest rays upon this emblem of a jaded standard and warped ideal. Even the wind and sea seemed to mouth a sardonic nuptial song. . . . And Larry Malone's colleen, all unconscious of the man who in the pine copse cringed away from the sight of her, looked out over the sea, comforted, perhaps, by the hazy hopes of all bruised and baffled creatures, musing, perhaps, on some project to "bring him around."

Brida's face reflected the same good-humored mockery and light compassion which her affianced's fervor and her mother's outbreak had evoked. She shrugged impatiently. "What difference—"

The abject flinch of the man's whole attitude belied a surface bravado. Brida gasped in amazement when he recoiled at the touch of her hand. His eyes, inflamed and always shifting, swerved guiltily from the figure in the distance to the girl beside him, fixed themselves upon her with that look of antipathy, at once spiritless and appetent, of one no longer eager for a joyous episode, no longer in rapport with a festival atmosphere, but merely prey to a vicious greediness for a temptress whose wiles half-heartedly he resisted, whose meshes sanctimoniously he feigned to tear asunder.

Again his eyes swerved to the pink-clad figure at the water-front, stared with a superstitious awe, as if here were an apparition all-powerful in its very paltriness, that beckoned to sanctuary. . . .

Larry Malone's colleen, by no subtler an expedient than a stroll at dawn, had

launched her supreme effort to "bring him around." For the man's dread of too strenuous a conflict, the quake of his soul at the prospect of another scrape, had at last overcome a verve for existence handed down as a legacy from a long line of adventure-loving Noxons. All that was left now of the carefree abandon which had swept this girl to his arms was a slight hint of apology and shame in his shifting glance. And when once again she caught at his hand, with a slight shiver he reeled away from her, as if from something repellent to the fastidious instincts of a reformed rake.

Beneath the staggering impact of the insult, she stood quite motionless, while her face blanched, and expressed in rapid succession, bewilderment, disappointment, swift rage that twisted her features almost into a snarl, apathetic indifference, and finally a certain aloof tenderness, as toward something once part of a cherished and immeasurably remote past. "You couldn't quite catch the holiday spirit, could you, dear? The holiday spirit—I can't quite explain it, but—well, it laughs at a creature in torture, and so comforts. That girl there inspires respect, and yet how she is in any way concerned with—Inspires respect!" She looked at the woman who was walking laboriously in their direction, and then back at him. "Respect."

Upon his face the very greediness which battled with a sense of shame invested him with some of the dignity of hurt and hapless creatures. He seemed to realize that she was sweeping him, though very graciously sweeping him, from his position as first of the pedestalled deities. No trace of worshipfulness now in her attitude, and yet no derision.

"God bungles things so, the poor darling," she whispered. "He, too, has all the majesty of the commonplace."

A little quiver at the corners of her mouth gave promise of a forthcoming smile. The rose tints were already creeping back to her cheeks, and the glow to her eyes. It was only a few

minutes before that she had cried out her great conviction, and since then she had passed through amazement and horror, through rage and apathy, but always with a flashing insight which placed upon each passing emotion its just value. It was only an hour or two before that she had come to him so gladly at the urge of a spell in the air which now, at its apex, served merely to acclaim the triumph of Larry Malone's colleen. She had come, all tiptoe impatience, swept by a blithe balminess of spirit that rendered nugatory all ethical dictates, only to be stigmatized at the end as a tawdry temptress. She had come with her eyes lifted in worship to a figure on a pedestal, only to be made aware that the pedestal was bare. With sympathetic mockery she had resisted the pathos of old Malone's declarations, and her mother's pleas, only to find herself reduced to the same sympathetic mockery before Keith Noxon. . . . And in the face of it all she broke into laughter.

—Into laughter without malice or irony, laughter wherein rich organ tones blent now with the bell-like peals, laughter mellow and sweeter than that which had rippled from her throat before an apparition at the water-edge interrupted its flow, laughter that sounded all the victory of vanquishment. Brida Creel, by sheer force of a gusto for life, could relish even a savage joke played upon herself. Brida Creel had crossed her threshold.

Her little nostrils dilated. "You're inexpressibly dear to me, Keith Noxon! You're my past. Oh, but it's good to feel that I've a future so rich in pasts ahead of me!"

The morning star, fading, still seemed to sparkle with approval. Earth, and sea, and sky were aflame with copper-shot purples, crimsons, green. And there was ritual and revel in the varicolored suffusion. It was as if inaugural ceremonies were in progress. For no vestige of fevered incompleteness betrayed itself now in the girl. She was launched triumphantly on a course of existence whose pro-

logue, potent to cast a radiance over all that was to follow, by virtue of an ultimate exultant note outweighed in significance this fast-approaching conflict between a high-hearted insurgent, on the one hand, and a dreary world, on the other; outweighed especially the shoddy intricacies of the first chapter, of the chaos ahead for Mrs. Creel, for Larry Malone, and his colleen, and his bride. Brida Creel was ready, supremely ready, ready for everything, ready for combat, ready for defeat after defeat, ready for one maze of crass pettiness after another, ready for no matter how malevolent a trickery fate had in store, ready to enjoy it all—

—And ready, above everything else, to play the reprobate for the assuagement of Keith Noxon's soul. The streak of alloy had finally manifested itself. And yet a little shame still blent with the grovelling greed on his face, shame that would linger there until the greed became a frightened satiation, until an intrigue ended in disaster, and a pattern citizen, reclaimed, penitent, "brought around," returned to the conjugal status. . . .

"Here and now," the girl was whispering; so low that he failed to catch the words, "here and now, when it's all bright and beautiful, your finer instincts rebel. But later—later! Little family dinners for just the four of us, guilty whispers, handclasps on the sly. . . . How you'll wail for a Jezebel's

wooings! How you'll fall for a Jezebel's wiles!"

It was at one with her relish, for a joke played upon her that she should recognize a bantering obligation to this erstwhile idol. Just as, a few hours before, she had followed a histrionic flair to mislead her mother, and Larry Malone, so now she gave her head an insolent tilt, and swayed audaciously at the hips as she approached him in hackneyed siren style. . . . But no sooner had her hand touched his than she laid aside her masquerade. It was a very tender mockery that parted her lips, a very real compassion that shone from her eyes. "In my own unregenerate way, skipper, I'll try to play square."

There followed a nod of finality. The prologue was over.

Slowly the woman in the pink peignoir was approaching from the distance. And slowly Brida Creel moved away now over the silky pine needles, looking back over her shoulders with a laughing pity in her eyes. At last she reached the old water-gate. Slowly, step by step, she descended until only her radiant face was visible, then only her eyes and forehead, and finally only a strand of wind-tossed hair.

"I love you!" She sent the lie carolling to him just when, for an instant, her arms shot into the air—eager, white, challenging arms that welcomed a fray with a boisterous sea.



THE notion that widows are unusually attractive to men is one of the grand delusions of humanity. The truth is, of course, that men are unusually attractive to widows.



EPIGRAM: A platitude with vine leaves in its hair.



CRÊPE DE CHINE

By James Stephens

Author of "Here Are Ladies," "The Crock of Gold," "Mary, Mary," etc.

THE thing came on her like a thunderbolt, and indeed while she was submitting to destiny the phrase "like a bolt from the blue" did detach itself for an instant in her consciousness, but it was fallen upon and buried by the avalanche of emotions and angers and plannings which her mind was trying so vainly to deal with.

She had gone, it was a custom of hers on sunny afternoons, into the Saint Stephen's Green Park and had walked a little, and sat a little, and looked for a while at the flowers and at the ducks swimming each with a tiny brood bobbing lightly in its wake; and at a seagull that swooped and slanted to touch the water with the tip of its bill, and then, without a pause, slid widely sideways, and up easily again, and away on adventures never to be recorded.

Her purpose was to go down Grafton Street to a shop in the window of which, too late for action on the previous evening, she had seen a blouse marked at a price which she believed must be a mistake or a shop trick. "She foresaw there would be trouble in the shop when she asked for it at the price marked on the ticket, and that the salespeople would say the blouse was too small for her, and would try to make her take another of the same kind at three times the price. But she meant to give battle and was determined not to leave the shop without the identical blouse whether it fitted her or whether it did not.

She was in the Green to prepare herself for this battle, for by gazing on tranquil water we gain something of

its tranquillity, and the untroubled serenity of flowers and blue skies would give her the serenity of mind which could break even the will of a drapery salesman.

If, she thought, they send me a saleswoman I shall have a hard fight, but if they send me a man I may win without much trouble, for men get tired easily. Also, she thought, men cannot fight well when they know they are in the wrong, but women fight as well for the wrong as for the right. The man will know that the figure marked on the blouse is an advertising trick designed to entice people into the shop, and when I accuse him of that he will give in where a woman would not.

The influence of the peaceful, sunny place had done its work and feeling braced and tranquil she arose from the iron seat and turned up the alley by the lake towards the Grafton Street exit. When she stood she looked across the pond and noticed that two friends of hers were seated in the shade of a small tree, and the thought came to her that she would tell them of her errand. She might even ask them to accompany her, for in a shop all discussion closes when several voices are raised in protest.

She went across the steep little bridge and bore down on her friends. They did not notice her approach, and she thought smilingly: "When women so lose themselves in talk they are either talking scandal or dress." And she halted a moment so that she might not come on them too abruptly. The short, bushy tree was between them, and on this side of the tree also there was a seat.

The instant she halted she heard her own name mentioned, and knew that she was the subject of the scandal if scandal it was. She smiled shyly, slipped into the seat on her side of the tree, and listened to the talk of her friends.

In a few seconds she was no longer smiling, and where she had been listening carelessly she now listened with her whole being.

"How did he come to marry her?" said one voice.

"He didn't marry her, my dear," the other voice replied, "she married him."

"She must be at least ten years older than he is."

"Yes, at least, and I'm sure he knows it by this."

"Do they get on together, do you think?"

"One never knows, but I would say they do not. They snap a good deal at each other, and even when he does not snap he seems always impatient when she is speaking."

"Well, she has a strident voice."

"She never talks, she yells, and he is one of those strung-up people who get shivers when— Do you know what I think?"

"What do you think?"

"I think that some day or other he will run away from her."

"I don't think he will do that. I don't think he is the kind . . . of man—"

"I do. I think he is exactly the kind of man. If they had children he is the kind of man who would never leave his children: but they have none, and that is the only thing which could hold him to her. Think of the way she yells in a room or in a restaurant, and how quiet he is. Every movement of hers must seem to him like the worst kind of vulgarity. And she is vulgar, look at the day she dresses. She is always a fright. If she has the right skirt she has the wrong boots, and when her blouse is right, her hat is wrong. She hasn't got a particle of taste, the poor thing."

"She has no taste in dress, that is true, but—"

"She has no taste in anything, and she draws attention to herself always, always. He must hate to be with her."

"Men don't see these things."

"Don't they, my dear! Don't they! That type of man notices everything. I've seen him looking at her when he didn't know anyone was looking at him. Oh! I'm no fool, and I tell you this, that I'll bet you anything he'll run away from her."

"Oh, now, she is not so bad as you say."

"Not for us, but for him she is worse than anything we could say. He hates her, and if he doesn't run away from her before the year is out I—I'll never believe in my own judgment again."

"If only she had a child, the poor thing!"

"She hasn't one and she'll never have one, you and I know that."

Listening to them, she grew livid with rage. She rose to her feet, stepped carefully to the grass and walked away.

These were her friends!

These gabby monsters who kissed her every time they met and kissed her every time they parted! And they were always meeting. She went to tea in their houses: they came to tea in hers. Oh! They would not take tea together again. Never again would either of these women put a foot inside her door. That was one thing gained from it all. She knew her enemies now. She was warned at least. Ah, but she would meet them. She would meet them once more and she would cut them to the bone. Now she knew the run of their tongues, but they did not know hers yet. Her husband did, and they would, too. Her husband! He was to run away from her! Well, she would see about that, too. That man! Man! He was more like a snail than a man. And he was to run away from her! She would like to see him run. Indeed, if there was a run in him she would make him run. And he wasn't pleased with her ways. He looked at

her, it seemed, when he thought no one observed him, and looked at her as if he hated her. One of these days he might have cause to hate her. A stuck-up prig that thought no one was to open their lips except himself. And he had to have two clean collars every day. And no one but himself was under any circumstances to go into his study. And no one was to open their mouths while his mouth was open. And he wanted a bedroom all to himself. And he wanted his meals at regular hours. And he wanted to go out whenever he liked and come in at all hours. And he wanted his clothes properly brushed. Well! All those things would be seen to, and he would learn that he wasn't a gay bachelor any longer. She would teach him that he had a wife, and that she had her rights, and that she would have her rights.

As she walked her brain was reeling with rage and spite. She would joyfully have learned that her two friends were dead: that they had been crushed by a tram or that a roof had fallen in on them. Less than that they did not deserve, but for her husband no catastrophe could be enormous enough, no torment sufficiently harrowing: no death or disaster of which she could think would be adequate to that man's perfidy. Man! and away her mind went again denouncing and sneering and threatening.

She forgot all about the blouse which was marked vastly below its proper price in the Grafton Street window; she forgot about her two friends and what they had said of her under the tree in the Park: she forgot about the street and the people in the street whom she jostled and pushed aside without raising an eye to them: she remembered only that there was someone whom she could make pay for all this: someone whom she would make pay and she was hastening towards him to make him pay.

The evening was advanced and although the sun was still shining it was shining with a difference. That limpid

clarity of the morning was gone: the strong white glare of afternoon had changed: here was now a dust of gold, the first veil of those innumerable veillings which the evening does not cease to spread until her obscurity is complete, and life is hushed, and all the eyes that were open close in quietness.

Under this tender radiance she walked home and untouched by it, touched only by the lowest passions of her being she reached home.

The maid who opened the door said, in reply to her question, that the master was not in yet; and she remembered that at that hour he always went for a walk. "He has been out a long time today," said the maid.

She went upstairs and took off her hat.

Reminders of her husband were visible everywhere through the house. Here was one of his waistcoats; there was a cigar case; yonder a pair of his slippers, and the sight of them set her off again. . . . "And he must have a separate bedroom, and he must have this, and he must have that, and no one else is to have anything. And no one is to say a word until he has finished speaking. And no one is to go into his study. . . ."

She arose and marched resolutely downstairs and into his study. She sat down, looking about the room with a feeling of dislike that was almost hatred even for the room. A sheet of paper was lying on the table and she drew it idly towards her. It was written upon. She read it. It was a short note saying he could no longer live with her and giving the address of his solicitors, who would regulate their affairs and make all the necessary arrangements. It said that under no circumstances would he ever return to her.

As she read the blood ebbed at one stroke from her cheeks, and at a stroke rushed blindingly back again, and her hand that held the paper began to tremble violently.

THE CYCLE

By T. F. Mitchell

MY youth was spent in the world of pleasure: a world of rosy highlights, a riot of sparkling wine, pretty women and rollicking song, permeated with the bluish haze of cigarette smoke.

I married and settled down to the staid respectable life of convention. When I was fifty, my wife died.

Left to my own devices again, I came by accident on a new world, one which charmed me with its novelty; a world of rosy highlights, a riot of sparkling wine, pretty women and rollicking song, permeated with the bluish haze of cigarette smoke.



I HAVE MADE TWO SONGS FOR YOU

By Harold Crawford Stearns

I HAVE made two songs for you:
One for heaven and one for hell,
One that you can tell to few,
One that you can never tell.

I have planned them all these years . . .
Out of star-dust one was made,
And the other, dull with tears,
Out of twilight and blue shade.

I have made two songs for you:
One for giving, one to hold;
Sing the first, as youth must do,
Hug the last when you are old.



IT is dangerous for a man to have been made happy by too many women:
it makes him bitter against them.



THE WHITE STREAK

By Sherwood Anderson

Author of "Windy MacPherson's Son," "Marching Men," etc.

I

HE is old now and looks old, but when this story begins he was a man of twenty-five. His father, a commission merchant dealing in poultry, butter and eggs, had an office in South Water Street in the City of Chicago.

He was married to the daughter of a respectable merchant and had bought a white frame house in a suburb. He went into his father's business and for a time things went well with him. Then something happened. He grew weary of the selling of butter and eggs and of living in a suburb. Something like a revolution went on in his soul. His boyish blue eyes were clouded and as he went up and down in the noisy, crowded street where he was employed and heard men higgling and quarreling over the price to be paid for a shipment of butter, he trembled with anger. He began to hate the other men in the office, and in a fury of hatred ran out of the narrow, dirty street filled with wagons piled high with food stuffs. Running around the corner he stood under the elevated railroad at Lake and State Streets. His body trembled and he looked about with wild eyes. In State Street he saw thousands of men, women and children going into stores to buy clothes.

"The world is mad," he muttered to himself. "If people are not thinking of the clothes they wear they are thinking and talking of food. Am I to spend my life in the silly business of seeing that people are fed?"

The young man, whose name was Bushnell, could not understand what

had happened to him. He tried to discuss the matter with his wife but wasn't very clear, and his wife did not know what he was talking about. Like thousands of other young people who live in respectable suburbs, Bushnell and his wife had been married because of a situation founded on emotional hunger. They had met at a dinner party given at the house of a mutual friend and had wanted each other. When the hunger within became too persistent to be quieted, the young man blurted out a proposal. For months before their marriage they spent their evenings together, sitting in silence, each tremendously conscious of the other. After marriage they found they had little to say to each other.

It was during the third summer after his marriage that the revolution took place in the soul of young Bushnell. In the evening when he went home from the office in the elevated train he put his head out of the car window and tried to reason with himself.

"Everyone has to work," he thought. "It does not make any difference what a man does."

He looked at the long rows of grim brick buildings past which the train hurried and thought of the millions who, like himself, must be employed in dark ugly places.

"It is what life is like," he muttered to himself. "It cannot be helped."

The whole city was, he thought, given over to ugliness and the people who rode with him on the trains were ugly in the dreary sameness of their lives and their thoughts. The men and women sitting in the car homeward bound from the city talked of their af-

fairs. It seemed to young Bushnell that the women talked always of clothes and the men of the buying and selling of foods. He dreaded the thought of going into his own house and sitting at table. His wife, he was afraid, would talk of the buying and cooking of food. The street in which his house stood was lined with shade trees and he liked to walk under the trees, but he decided he did not like the people who lived in the houses.

The suburb in which young Bushnell lived was called Evanston. There were many newly married young people living in white houses on tree lined streets in Evanston, and the Bushnells became part of a group of young people who spent their evenings together. There was a man who lived across the street and who made his living in the advertising business. He was forever planning to put on the market some new kind of foodstuff. He specialized in that. When he went into a new project he asked young Bushnell's advice.

"You are connected with the selling of foods. Give me the dope," he begged. "You know better than I what people think about foods."

Young Bushnell hated the advertising man and he hated also the retail merchant, the lawyer and the man who dealt in real estate who helped to make up the neighboring group. On the evenings when they with their wives came to his house he wanted to cry out against them, to tell them to go away and never come back. He said nothing of the sort because he could think of no possible excuse for so unexpected and unexplainable an outburst.

The summer during which all this occurred was unusually hot. Young Bushnell was tired. All the time he wanted to fight or to cry. His wife had a guest at the house, a young woman cousin who taught school in some town in the East. When she came the young man paid no attention to her, but after she had been at the house for two or

three weeks he noted that she was habitually silent. He began to be attracted to her.

In the evening, when people of the neighborhood came to sit and talk with him and his wife on the front porch of their house, he remained silent and looked at the school teacher. He thought the talk and the laughter of all the men and women sitting about sounded like the croaking of frogs in a pond late at night. He looked over their heads and shuddered. Then he looked at the school teacher clad in a white dress and persistently silent. He wondered what she was thinking about.

One evening when it seemed to him that the talk of his wife and his friends had become utterly meaningless, he arose from his chair and went unobserved into the house. On an impulse he crept upstairs and went stealthily into the room occupied by his wife's guest. Standing in the darkness he tried to think what he wanted to do. Then going to a closet door he opened it and saw hanging there one of the white dresses worn by the woman. It made a white streak in the darkness, just as the silent white clad woman made a white streak in the darkness of his mind. Dropping to his knees he laid his cheek against the soft cloth of the dress. Tears came into his eyes. Although he had never given the subject of marriage much thought, he was sure that his wife, because of her marriage to him, would not have understood what he was doing. The thought made him blindly resentful. In the darkness he muttered words concerning the matter. Holding the white dress tightly against his cheek he declared his love for the silent woman who had worn it and would wear it again.

"She's beautiful because she has kept herself to herself," he declared. "She has let herself stand alone and far off. She has dignity and does not talk of food and of clothes. It is wonderful to have her here and not know what she is thinking about."

II

THE man who went into his father's commission business in South Water Street is now at the head of the firm. He is sixty years old and has prospered. His father is dead. On the whole he is happy enough. When he and his wife had been married for a long time she gave birth to a daughter who is now a young woman at school in the East. The feeling he once had in regard to the buying and selling of foods has gone quite away. He is a prominent member of a church in Evanston and stands very well in that respectable suburb.

As for the school teacher who is his wife's cousin and who once came to visit at his house, he has forgotten her name. He only thinks of her once in a long time.

Sometimes when business is unusually heavy he works over his books in the office at night. He has dinner at one of the big restaurants in the city and then hurries away to the office. Although he has prospered, his office, like most of the offices in South Water Street in Chicago, is a small dirty affair upstairs over a storeroom. At the back of the office there is a window that looks out over the Chicago River.

As Bushnell walks at night through the dark silent streets he is reminded of the feeling he once had in regard to the buying and selling of foods. As he is now an old man he stumbles a little. He is bald and a nervous disease had twisted his head to one side. As he hurries along he peers into the darkness and shudders.

During the day South Water Street, where rations for millions of people are handed about, is the busiest place in Chicago, but at night it is dark, lonely and dreary. The roar of the voices of innumerable hucksters has drifted away and the multitude of wagons loaded with boxes and bales that all day blocked the roadway have disappeared into the darkness. In the dim light at the edge of the sidewalks huge iron

cans are heaped high with half decayed fruit and vegetables. A sour pungent smell greets the nostrils. Deceitful old women wander about, creeping here and there in the darkness. In their arms they carry baskets which they fill with frozen potatoes and spoiled bananas, apples and oranges.

The merchant goes into his office and bends over his books. He tries not to think. On summer evenings when it is very hot he opens the window that looks out over the river. When his work is done and he has put on his coat he stands for a moment looking into the darkness. As when he was a young comely man he thinks of a life spent in the buying and selling of food with a shudder.

At night the Chicago River, a grey stream running under ugly bridges out of the lake into the land, is transformed. It becomes at times, when the night is clear and the surface of the river is stirred by night winds, utterly lovely. Looking down at it, a sense of mystery with dread creeps over the old merchant. He forgets his old wife and his daughter and feels suddenly young and alone in the world. On the river below a boat passes making a white streak in the darkness and he is reminded of the time long ago when a silent, white-clad woman sat among the chattering people on the porch of his house. He wants to put his cheek against the sides of the boat as he once put his cheek against the white gown that had been worn by the woman. For a moment his mind, that for years has been quite normal and sure of itself, is confused. He walks up and down in the office and opens and closes his fists. Although the river is close at hand and although it is within a stone's throw of the dark evil-smelling street, in which the horrible old women go up and down, it seems to him strangely remote and unreal.

"It stands alone and far off," he whispers.

He tries to reason with himself and

tells himself that the stream is in reality a sewer, that it is not love at all.

"I am becoming a doddering old fool," he declares, and closing the window, hurries away.

In spite of himself the merchant remembers the school teacher. He decides that she is the most beautiful thing that ever came into his life. Overcome with emotion he wanders about muttering and talking aloud. He decides to do something desperate to find and to declare his love for the woman in white, but when he gets into a lighted street and sees his reflection in a store window, his desperate mood passes away. The figure he sees reflected in the window of the stores is old, twisted and worn. It is like the old women who salvage spoiled fruit in the street out of which he has come.

In the mind of the merchant, the

school teacher, whom he has not seen for twenty-five years, will always remain young, silent and lovely. She is for him a white streak in the dark places of life, something far off and beautifully strange, something to dream of but not to be touched.

On summer evenings the merchant goes home to his suburb lost in reflection. He is depressed but on the streets of Evanston he meets men and women who speak to him with respect. The mood he was in when he came out of his office passes away. The reappearance of the white streak has no outward effect on his mind. However, for several days after a night in the office he is somewhat more tender and thoughtful in his attitude toward the fat, grey-haired old woman who is his wife and toward his daughter in school when she comes into his mind.



FLIES IN THE OINTMENT

By Thomas Effing

I AM greatly annoyed by trivial things, things out of place.

A water beetle in my consommé.

A gospel-tract in my Rabelais.

A fly crawling across a lady's décolleté.

A glass of water on the dining-room table.

The edge of the butler's waistcoat in the Russian dressing.

My wife horning into my love affairs.

My love affairs.



THE humor of a wise man is a dagger that stabs to the very heart.



PORTRAIT of New York: a head-waiter with sixteen hands.

HAROLDINE

By Latrobe Carroll

I

HAROLDINE was bored. Nothing happened in Lucerne. She felt a surge of rebellion as she walked beside her aunt. For two weeks she hadn't met anyone under fifty, or gone rowing, or climbed even a hill. It was very discouraging to a girl of sixteen. She hated the Hotel Alpenblick, with its reading-room encrusted with gold, where elderly Germans sat about and complained of draughts and rustled newspapers and wrinkled up their foreheads when she opened the door a trifle suddenly. It was so dreary that even her aunt disliked it, and at that very moment they were on their way to new quarters in another hotel, the Grand.

Haroldine felt sure that in spite of its name it would be drearier than the Alpenblick. Gloomily she anticipated its melancholy stretches of carpeted hall, its vast reading and writing-rooms, where no one ever met anybody. She hadn't talked to a young man for months, she reflected; she wondered if it were because she looked so young. As she walked along the quai she wished her skirt were longer. It was humiliating to be thought a child. She disliked her hat, too; a broad-brimmed hat with cherries on it. Who but a child ever wore a broad hat with cherries messing about on the brim? She hated her braid; abruptly she put her hand behind her and gave it a petulant jerk. How was it possible to look eighteen with that detestable appendage cluttering her back? It was all very depressing. But she found it impossible to be gloomy long, for the air was a delicate stimulant and the lake

was slapping the stone quai with brisk, foam-crested little waves.

"Oh, aunty," she asked suddenly, "can't we take a boat? And I will row you!"

Miss Fry shook her head.

"Only the other day I observed in the newspapers," she said, "that two people were drowned on this very lake. How anyone could be so foolish—"

"Oh, but *please*, aunty!" Haroldine interrupted. "I'll be so careful and we'll fringe along the shore, and I'll barely breathe!"

Miss Fry, a believer in self-control, pursed her lips.

"I should think you would have learned, Haroldine," she said, "that you will never get anything from me by begging."

Haroldine didn't want her aunt to see the tears in her eyes. She felt sure that Miss Fry wouldn't be sympathetic. She felt that her aunt might even take a beastly pleasure in seeing tears in her eyes. So she turned her head abruptly and was startled to find herself gazing into the face of a very good-looking young man. At least she thought him handsome, though he was considerably blurred. When she had winked the tears away and could see him clearly he was better looking than ever. He wasn't well dressed, but he had a flowing, black, interesting tie and really superb brown eyes. He regarded her gravely, and she was immediately conscious of an odd, very pleasant throb. It was a little like an electric shock, only a much more natural, every-day sort of feeling. He passed, and Haroldine fixed her eyes on his back, hoping with intensity that he would turn round. Then:

"Oh, heavens!" she breathed.

He *had* turned round and boldly looked into her eyes. Her face glowed. When he disappeared in the throng she felt desperately forlorn. She was silent for a time, twisting her handkerchief into compact knots. She decided to make a final appeal.

"Auntie," she asked, with a little hope in her voice, "can't we go up in the airship? I noticed it was making a trip tomorrow."

Miss Fry began to speak as though her niece had touched a trigger within her:

"Haroldine, I don't know what's been the matter with you for the last few days. You've been dissatisfied with absolutely everything. And now, out of sheer restlessness, you want to risk both our lives in that airship! Really, I don't understand you!"

Haroldine knew that if she didn't get away she should burst into tears. And she loathed the idea of bursting into tears.

"Auntie," she said, trying to steady her voice, "may I go and look in that store?"

Her aunt consented, and she turned away with a quick gush of relief. To get away—only to get away! She crossed the street, stood before the shop window, and gazed at an embroidered table-cover waveringly gorgeous through tears. Poignantly she stamped her foot again and again and again.

"Oh, damn, damn, damn, damn, damn, damn!" She forced the words out in passionate little gusts of breath, and felt better, though she found she had bitten her tongue rather badly. She turned to follow her aunt, and then something peculiar happened: her feet became the dominant part of her and faced her about in precisely the opposite direction! She walked to the entrance of a large hotel near by, hesitated for a moment at the door, and then went in.

II

WHEN she came out her shoulders were innocent of a single strand of hair.

And wonder of wonders! The cherries no longer adorned her hat. Its severe lines were unmarred by a single crimson globule. Her eyes were sparkling as she stepped into the throng on the quai. Was he still there? Had she misread his glance? She wasn't sure whether she wanted to be spoken to after all. In fact, as she thought it over, she was sure she didn't. Why not look for her aunt—and then she saw him. He was crossing the street obliquely and would be beside her in an instant. Under her blouse Haroldine's heart thumped.

"You stunning thing," she said to herself. "You stunning, stunning thing!"

He approached her and spoke in just the soft voice she hoped he had:

"Pardon, but I see you are lonely. I am ver' lonely. We promenade a little, yes?"

"Why"—Haroldine gasped, "why, yes!"

Side by side they walked along for an instant. Haroldine remembered her aunt.

"Only," she added, "let's get away from the quai. I don't like it."

They crossed the avenue and plunged into the maze of streets that intersect Lucerne.

"It is a mos' charming day, yes?" he remarked.

"Yes," Haroldine assented.

She was trembling a little and felt oddly faint. It was silly—she wondered if she were going to be ill.

"Can't we," she ventured, "can't you take me somewhere to eat?"

He looked surprised, but smiled charmingly. When he smiled she thought him like her favorite actor.

"Mos' certainly," he said. "We go take some cakes in a *patisserie*, yes? I also, I have the hunger like the devil."

This reassured her. Emptiness created a bond between them.

"Where," she asked presently, "did you get that funny, nice tie?"

He seemed startled.

"But it is an artist's tie," he explained.

"Oh," she said.

There was silence for a time.

"You know something?" he asked at length.

"What?" she demanded.

He looked down into her eyes.

"You are very beautiful!" he said.

She started, abruptly troubled, but with her embarrassment was blended a pleasant gush of emotion.

"I'm afraid," she said, daring a glance into his eyes, "that you're a fearful flatterer."

"But no," he protested. "I swear it is the truth. Your eyes, your hair, your cheeks—and my God, your most lovely little nose!"

Haroldine laughed.

"Go on!" she said, encouragingly.

"You mock yourself of me," he reproved her. "You say: 'He is the big liar.'"

"I never said such a thing in my life," Haroldine answered with some indignation.

They crossed the street and she slipped her arm into his with a pleasurable quiver.

"It's nice being with you," she said, looking up at him. "You see, we've been traveling for months now, and I haven't had a single soul but my aunt I could talk to. And a few maids in hotels. You see, my aunt says it isn't proper to talk to strangers. But you"—she glanced up at him—"don't seem the least bit like a stranger."

"I am a friend, yes?" he asked.

"Oh, yes." She gazed up at him earnestly. "Don't you think friendship is a wonderful thing? Sweethearts are gushy and you never feel quite sure of each other, but a friend, a true friend, whom you can tell every tiny trouble to—" She ended with a little burst of exaltation. "Emerson, you know," she added, "said 'What is so great as Friendship?'"

But he couldn't have been listening, for he was looking into the window of a bakery.

"Those cakes," he asked eagerly, "you like?"

"Which ones?" she demanded. "The puffy pink ones?"

He nodded.

"Oh, aren't they spiffing!" she exclaimed. "Let's go in and buy them!" And forgetting she was eighteen, she danced before him into the shop.

III

WHEN they came out she was eating a meringue defiantly, and with as much mess as possible. She was eating it in a way she knew would horrify her aunt. The cream oozed out and dripped to the pavement. To an exultant Haroldine the cake was a symbol of emancipation. With one hand slipped through her artist's arm and the other grasping the meringue, she almost hoped she should meet her aunt. The oozing triumph, she felt, would be able to exorcise legions of self-suppressed aunts.

"Isn't it nice and smeary?" she laughed.

"Have you the need of my handkerchief?" he demanded, a little apprehensively.

She felt that he did not sympathize fully with her experiment in indecorum.

They drifted through lanes that flowed with tourists; lanes bordered with postcards, wooden bears, carved crucifixes, carved hatracks, cuckoo clocks and affectionate, vast, maternal dogs nursing wooden progenies. Finally they sat down on a bench. He lit a cigarette. Haroldine watched the operation with the eager eyes of a squirrel.

"Oh, may I have one?" she asked.

"But certainly." He passed her the box. Almost reverently she took a cigarette. To her it seemed the slender embodiment of an immense wickedness. She put it away in her bag.

"I'll smoke it when I'm alone," she said.

They were still for a time.

"Do you know," she confided, evoking old memories, "ever since I was a tiny child I've wanted to paint. It must be glorious! Sometimes I've seen

sunsets that were simply thrilling and I've said to myself, 'Just because there isn't a single soul here who can paint this it's going to be lost forever and ever.'" Then her trend of thought changed. "How much do you get for a picture?" she demanded suddenly.

He made a grimace.

"I do not get," he said.

"But won't anyone buy your pictures?"

"They do not like them."

Haroldine experienced an uprush of sympathy.

"How detestable people are!" she exclaimed. "I wrote a poem once—and my aunt didn't like it. But Shakespeare wasn't appreciated until after he had died, was he?"

"No," he said sadly, "the genius, it is too elevated."

"Would—would you paint me?"

Her eyes met his with earnestness.

"Mademoiselle, if you had demanded that a year ago I would have been mos' enchanted to paint you of anything else in the world. For if you permit it to me to say, mademoiselle, you are—delicious!" Gallantly he raised her fingers to his lips. Haroldine was startled.

"How f-funny—I!" she sputtered. "I've never had anyone do that to me before. Do it again!" she pleaded.

He repeated the caress with a puzzled air. She laughed.

"Your moustache feels so fuzzy and scratchy," she said. "In America the men don't kiss our hands, you know."

"But your lover—he never kiss your han'?"

"I haven't—" Haroldine began and then stopped short. It would never do to admit she had never had a lover.

"I mean he doesn't kiss my hand," she explained, "but sometimes I let him kiss the tip of my ear." She said this with the air of an inspiration. For she had remembered the closing words of a novel: "And bending over her tenderly, he kissed the tip of her shell-like ear."

"But the mouth," the artist demanded. "He never kiss you on the mouth?"

"No," said Haroldine, inventing rapidly, "he says it's unsanitary."

He looked puzzled.

"Unsan—? I do not understand."

"Oh, I'm so glad," she laughed, "because it was only silly. Do let's talk about something else."

Neither spoke for a time. Haroldine bored into the gravel with the toe of her shoe and wished she had had lovers. The want of them gave her a physical sensation of coldness. Other girls of her age had lovers and went about being thought interesting. Her past life now seemed a dreary retrospect of lost opportunities for flirtation. A faint color brightened her cheeks; abruptly she dug her heel into the gravel to emphasize a sudden resolution. She turned to the artist.

"You may kiss me," she said.

He stared at her, a little taken aback.

"You are not angry with me?" he asked.

"No," she sighed. "No—just with life. Do you know those immortal lines of Shakespeare: 'Fie, 'tis an unweeded garden—' I've forgotten the rest. Anyway, I can understand people's committing suicide, can't you? And don't kiss me after all," she added despondently.

Then she felt his fingers closing over her hand gently. She was so in need of sympathy that she didn't mind. Presently he began to stroke her cheek. She wondered if she ought to stop him, but she let him go on, though it tickled a little. He stopped after a while, though he still kept her hand in his. She said nothing and gazed out at a range of mountains.

It was nice, she thought, having him hold her hand. How much he must know about life and love! It made her feel absurdly young, gave her an empty, undeveloped feeling. . . . She thought of the pleasantness of sophistication and presently she spoke, looking down at the gravel:

"Have you—have you a wicked book? I've always wanted to read one." She blushed faintly. "But I never could seem to get hold of one,"

she continued. "Haven't you one you could lend me? I wouldn't get it dirty and I'd send it back from Interlaken by parcel post."

"My books," he said sadly, "are—how you say?—in hock."

"What a pity," she exclaimed. "Oh, I'm so tired of reading the things in the hotels: guide books and *Daily Mails*, and Bibles, and Paris-New York *Heralds* and records of Swiss Alpine Clubs. Have you ever read a record of a Swiss Alpine Club?" she demanded.

He shook his head.

"Stacks upon stacks upon stacks of books," she went on, "and not a single wicked one among them. I've looked."

Her voice ended on a despondent note.

"But why you so sad?" he asked. "Nothing to do all day but sit on a nice big chair."

"Oh, but I am though," she assured him.

"You poor thing," he comforted. "You *very* unhappy?"

"Unhappy?" Haroldine echoed, as a gush of recollections rose in her. "Oh, most awfully! I get up in the morning and aunty says: 'Now we're going to have our French lesson,' and I simply can't learn the verbs and I end by crying and then it's time for lunch, and after lunch aunty says: 'Now we're going to take our walk,' and we take it. And then it's time for supper, and after supper aunty knits and I read *Punch* or something, and then I write to my best girl friend, and I get so sad asking her about the dances at home I want to cry again, but there are so many people around I have to go upstairs to do it."

She paused to draw a deep breath.

"Oh," she broke out passionately, "I hate hotels and I hate Lucerne and I hate my aunt—yes, I *hate* her!" she ended savagely, with blazing eyes. "The only thing I don't hate," she added, "is you."

He kissed her then, but she was almost too disturbed to notice it. Afterwards she was amazed at her indiffer-

ence to this epochal event of a first kiss.

"I, too," he said, "am ver' sad."

She looked surprised.

"You?" she asked. "Why, I thought you were the happiest—"

"I was," he answered. "But not now."

"Then we're sad together, aren't we?" she said sympathetically. "Please do tell me about yours."

She knew he must be setting his teeth hard, for the muscles in his cheeks swelled. He looked down at the gravel for a moment.

"I do not—" he began. "I no longer— Oh, but I cannot tell," he ended.

"You would have the *mépris* for me, you would despise—. I make the pictures, I make them and I make them, but no one buy, I go hungry, I starve and now"—he waved deprecatingly—"I am no longer hungry. I make the money. But I am sad. *Voilà!*"

"But aren't you going to tell me?" Haroldine asked.

"Oh, *non*," he said, and shook himself as if seeking freedom from an idea.

Haroldine patted his hand.

"Please do cheer up," she said. "We might—we might go and have some more cakes, and I will pay for them."

But he only shrugged his shoulders moodily.

"I have not the hunger," he said.

But he, too, must have been considering remedies for depression, for at length he asked:

"You like the roulette?"

"Gambling?" she demanded.

He nodded.

She revived at the idea.

"I never have gambled in my life, but I'd adore to," she said. "Come on, let's do!"

He led the way to the Casino.

As she entered the gambling-room she saw a great many people gathered about a low, very long table covered with green baize. Near the center of this table stood a short, sleek man who was in the act of tossing an ivory ball round the ledge of a revolving roulette wheel. As the wheel came to a stop

there was a moment of tension broken by the croupier's voice: "*Vingt-sept, rouge, impair et passe!*" There followed the clink of coin as the winners were paid and the francs on the losing numbers raked in. Haroldine's eyes sparkled.

"What fun!" she exclaimed.

"It is here," her companion said sadly, "I lose thirty, forty francs."

They approached the table.

"Do please tell me how to bet," Haroldine begged.

With the air of a pontiff of Fortune he advised her to stake a franc on the red. She did so, feeling the excitement of a great viciousness. It was all just like the gambling scene in the last novel she had read. Here were the same long tables, the same tenseness. Here she might win or lose a fortune. Then she remembered she had only four francs.

"*Messieurs, faites vos jeux,*" the croupier was intoning in a thick, velvet voice. He closed the stakes by adding: "*Rien ne va plus,*" and there was silence.

The roulette wheel was revolving very slowly now. Haroldine watched it with every muscle in her body rigid. "Come red, come red, come red!" she breathed. The ball rolled from a red socket into a black one. She grew limp with disappointment. But then it rose to the lip of the socket, hung balanced for a thrilling instant and dropped into the red. She was startled to see the people about her look at her and smile. Then she realized that she had squeaked. It was hard to be eighteen in spite of one's fiercest resolution.

"I never was so excited!" she told her admirer. "Let's bet again!"

When they left the Casino Haroldine had won ten francs. Reluctantly she went down the steps into the street.

"Why," she asked, "did they drag me away just when I was winning?"

"If you rest there," he said sagaciously, "you lose. I know. I lose forty francs."

It was late afternoon now; the sunshine had thinned.

"We go together somewhere now, yes?" he suggested.

"Yes—no. I don't know," said Haroldine. She was beginning to feel remorseful. She wondered where her aunt was and if she were much worried.

Suddenly she saw her. She was walking down the quai at a pace Haroldine had never imagined her capable of. She looked, Haroldine thought, like a black, hurrying, very pathetic mouse. As Miss Fry passed under a street lamp it was startling to see how terrified her expression was.

"We go together—" the artist began again.

Haroldine drew a sharp breath. She stepped behind a tree so that Miss Fry couldn't see her.

"It's my aunt," she interrupted.

He looked puzzled.

"I'm most awfully sorry," she said, "and I've had a perfect marvel of a time, but I—I have to go back to my aunt."

"Please come! Come with me—" he began. She shook her head. Abruptly she thrust her purse into his hand.

"Do take it," she begged. "Instead of me, I mean. And paint a picture."

His fingers closed on it automatically, but when he found it in his hand his face underwent an extraordinary change. First he looked blank and then furious.

"No," he burst out, "you do not understand! Please take! Please take! Oh, my God, that is the one thing I hate the worst! Please take!"

But she heard him only faintly, for she was walking toward Miss Fry.

IV

THAT evening, as Haroldine was dressing for dinner in her new room at the Hotel Grand, she planned a letter to her best girl friend. She tried to think of appropriate words in which to describe her artist. Her mind just bordered on the correct phrase for him. As she was entering the dining-room with her aunt she found it: My Hero.

That was it; he was her hero. No other man had such eyes and could stand so slender and tall and look down so romantically.

"My Hero!" she whispered to herself, and at the words her eyes had a full feeling as though they might shed tears. She entered the dining-room.

"Mademoiselle have lose something?"

She turned. It was the headwaiter and he was holding out her purse—the same purse she had given her artist! For a moment she was lost in wonder; how could it be in his possession? Then she stared. For over the white expanse of the headwaiter's shirtfront she recognized—her artist! Mechanically she took the purse. She was so surprised that she had followed her aunt half-way to their table before a flush of shame reached her cheeks.

"And I called him my hero!" she

said to herself. "A headwaiter!" She burned at the thought. "Oh, I might have known! How disgustingly oily he looks in that dress-suit!"

She lost herself in a labyrinth of humiliating recollections and remembered where she was only when her aunt called upon her to choose between consommé and mock-turtle soup.

"I won't have any soup," she said at length, sadly.

Her aunt straightened with surprise. "Haroldine, this is the first time you've not been hungry. Aren't you feeling well?"

"I'm well," said Haroldine, "but just—not hungry."

Furtively she opened her bag and under cover of the table-cloth threw his cigarette on the floor.

"My hero!" she breathed. "Oh!"

And with her heel she ground the cigarette to indistinguishable shreds.



PREFERENCE

By James Tracy

I

"*QUE m'aime, aime mon chien!*"

II

There were glittering diamonds in her hair, lustrous pearls about her neck, translucent emeralds on her fingers, cloth of gold about her body, and slippers studded with rubies on her feet.

Her face. . . .

I preferred her dog.



THE way to a woman's heart lies through your pocket book.



VAGARIES

By June Gibson

I

SHE was invariably drunk.
She smoked incessantly and was
addicted to a drug.
She had a lover.
She called her maids vile names and
beat her little children.
She murdered her husband. . . .
Her name was Lily.

II

A LITTLE child played on the shore.
He saw an oyster clinging to a rock
and reached for it with a stick.
As he was about to pull it toward
him a piece of glass shining in the sun-
light attracted his attention.
As he ran toward the glass a
wave washed the oyster from the
rock. . . .
In the oyster was a priceless pearl.

III

HE was wizened and anemic and had
thin hair.

No one asked his advice or respected
his opinion or sought his company.

Women avoided him.
He earned eight dollars a week.
One night he imbibed fourteen cock-
tails. . . .

A beautiful woman loved him be-
cause he was clever.

IV

THE palms were inviting.
All evening many beautiful women
had sought him and he was weary.
He came upon a young girl.
He thought she was very lovely.
Her face was as smooth as a white
pansy petal and her eyes were as dark
as late dusk.

He sat beside her.
For a long time they were silent,
watching the dancers through the palms.
When the music ceased she slipped
away. . . .

In the kitchen she said to one of the
other maids:

"Me and a swell waiter was watching
the dancers."



A MAN kissing a woman proves nothing. Likewise, a woman kissing a
man proves nothing. But it arouses suspicion.



A LITTLE JOURNEY TO THE PLACE OF ACCOUNTING

By Lillian Foster Barrett

I

SHE sank into her chair with just the right degree of surrender to circumstance and, closing her eyes, waited for the train to start. It started, to the gradual letting down of her pretty tension and the unclosing of her lovely eyes. The lady sat up, rearranged her baggage, twisted her chair to a more advantageous angle and then settled intensely to her day's work. It was always this way—the delicious thrill of expectancy preliminary to a trip, merging into the nice exhaustion of its start and then—then—

Thea Marden was a writer. She had come into prominence suddenly, spared the usual struggle for recognition. When pressed as to first causes (and in Thea's very psychic little set one was expected to press for first causes) she would only sigh and turn away with the murmured words, "I took ten years to live first."

Thea went in for onomatopoeia (they all did), and she never quite exhausted the possibilities of that word "live." A fresh change could always be rung upon it to suit the newest auditor, and Thea's voice was quite wonderful.

She herself preferred to linger on the *v*; that *v* could be made so redolent of Bourbon roses, so heavy with suggestion of oriental passion. She could conjure up in the mind of the least imaginative shadows of strange lands and uncertain fragments of great cities of the East that haunted through the very vagueness of their beauty. Or she could bring the word out quickly, incisively, with a crispness that bespoke Viking vigor. And yet again, there

was a certain reckless abandon as of supreme disillusion, a glimpse now and then of a soul bruised by contact with a brute world.

It was remarkable what Thea could do with that word "live." It proved a spur to the imagination of many a struggling young artist in whose vision Thea's present clarity of soul seemed the more luminous for the shadowy background of her past. Each member of her little *côterie* adored her, pronounced her an inspiration or stimulation according to viewpoint.

There was the Englishman, big, brown and tender, who, when Thea's name was mentioned, spoke softly of her humanity, her all-embracing charity. Thea had once said at an "evening," in answer to the criticism that a certain poet was dirty, "But what does dirt matter, when the man has poetry in his soul?"

It was really very touching. The incident was bruited about with the more poignant effect because of Thea's own daintiness.

"She's big, man, she's big," cried her Englishman.

Her Frenchman nodded thoughtfully.

"And she's beautiful," he said.

Then there was her Russian, a man who denied the flesh and exploited people's souls. Thea had been conscious the first second she had met him that her pretty new evening dress was without effect, that the impression she made—and it was perfectly obvious she had made one—came from something deeper than surface allure.

"I might just as well have been in rags," she said proudly afterwards and

thrilled to the experience the more.

The man had looked into her eyes.

"You—you are cruel," he had pronounced without preliminary.

That delighted Thea. She was getting rather tired of being big and brave and lovely.

"Cruel?" she had echoed with just the right degree of vague wonder.

"Cruel," he repeated. "You take people as experiments. You are ruthless about getting down deep into their minds, probing their souls. I can see it. I have been watching you. Now, at this moment, you are looking at me as a specimen. You are capable of tearing and rending to get what you want. It is your profession, to vivisection souls—to—to—"

Her newest cue!

From that time on Thea recognized herself as a sort of soul vampire and revelled in the image of her cruelty. It was evident in every way. Instead of the old wistfulness and plaintive voice there was substituted an intense alertness that was shown in her every move. The old evenings gave way to a success of *tête-à-têtes*. She would lean forward with parted lips and half closed eyes, a pretty picture of strained attention, and study her *vis-à-vis* with an intensity of scrutiny that let nothing escape it. It was wildly exciting; it had all the exhilaration of big game hunting. Thea felt she understood perfectly the sensations not only of the hunter about to shoot, but of the lion about to rend and tear.

She was perfectly ruthless. Once she sensed any reservation in a person's nature she was capable of resorting to the most unscrupulous methods to break through it. Her Russian encouraged her.

"You are like Zola," he said once.

"Oh, no!" she protested weakly and smiled contentedly.

She wrote up all her friends and then took to exploiting strangers. She even brought home to lunch with her once a little newsboy.

"It meant infinitely more to me than dining conventionally at the Ritz!"

she pronounced. "A beautiful adventure!"

Then there was the iceman, her janitress, the old man at the newsstand 'round the corner. More beautiful adventures that left Thea gasping with the possibilities of human nature. She let herself run riot and turned each time to her Russian for applause.

Then one night she had been brought up short.

She had been dining with her Frenchman, and they had come back to Thea's own apartment for coffee. The lights were low. The fire in the grate glowed fitfully and everything invited revelation.

Thea spoke in low tones of the mania that had come upon her, the passion for exploitation of the human soul. She spoke of the truth of intuition.

"I have reached the point where I know instinctively what a person is always. I can trace his thoughts, follow the inmost workings of his mind. I try not to, sometimes; it seems hardly fair, like looking in through an open window, and yet—well—my profession is my only excuse. And this, this thing, this craving for psycho-analysis is becoming my whole life, my—"

She looked very pretty and very intense as she spoke, her trailing black dress merging into the shadows of the room, her eager eyes lighted by the fire in the grate.

Then a strange thing happened. Her Frenchman turned away and Thea had the startled suspicion he turned away to smile. It was disconcerting; it destroyed the sense of security in herself as a convincing personality; it—it was, all in all, inexcusable and—

She rose trembling, and, wide-eyed, showed her hurt. The man faced her.

"But why take life second hand?" he said coolly. "Can it be you are afraid—"

Thea gasped.

Afraid! She who had all the blood instincts of the hunter who beats the African jungle for its prey! She who had been up in an aeroplane—how

many feet was it? She who probed deep, who had lived. *lived*, LIVED for ten years! The thing was preposterous, so preposterous in fact the words she would have uttered to combat the accusation refused to be spoken. All she could do was to stammer helplessly:

"I—I don't understand."

Her Frenchman nodded sagely.

"Oh yes you do. After all, it argues a concession to fear, a certain cowardice that you go to others to study life. Why not live first hand, put yourself under the microscope?"

"But I—I *have* lived for ten years," protested Thea.

The Frenchman laughed outright at that with an unpardonable air of condescension.

"Yesterday's sensations!" he exclaimed. "So many dried flowers! Musty and unwholesome! They crumble at a breath."

He shrugged.

Thea turned away. She felt herself on the verge of tears. It was as if all her theories, like the poor dead flowers, had crumpled at a breath. That fealty she had been able to exact from her followers just because of her own belief in herself she saw now in ashes.

"You are big," her Englishman had told her and believed it, because she had believed it, too.

And now, this infidel of a Frenchman had brought in a disturbing element with his hint of cowardice. Cowardice? Could there be truth in the accusation? Ought she herself to get down to things, drive life in a corner? Take emotion red with her heart's own blood, rather than by the cold white light of analytical reason? Yet why, why? She felt a violent protest and a wild fear. She had been so happy in her present life and would have been content to go on so always.

In the meantime, the Frenchman had relieved the tension.

"After all, you are beautiful, woman's only excuse for being at all," he had said lightly, and the evening ended

with a discussion of woman's place in the universe.

Thea had rather a bad time with herself during the next four weeks. The mocking smile she had surprised on the Frenchman's face she expected to see reflected on the faces of her other friends. She determined to forestall such an event by a change of tactics. She talked less of vivisectioning others, and began to converse gently of poetic license, viewed from an ethical standpoint.

"But you can't expect your artist to be held by ordinary laws. He has to feel to create, and you can't straight-jacket emotions!"

And yet again, apropos of a woman in their little *côterie* who had taken unto herself a *bel ami*:

"Why not?" Thea had asked with an arch of her delicate brows. "For a woman who writes it may be—well—a sort of higher economy of the soul."

Her Englishman sighed.

"Thea will sacrifice herself yet—for the sake of humanity," he commented sentimentally.

Her Frenchman smiled.

Her Russian looked mysterious.

Thea grew more and more pensive daily. Then an awful thing happened. One of her stories was returned. It was one that showed distinctly the influence of her present perturbation, but of course Thea didn't realize that.

"They are tiring of me at that office," she said to herself and swallowed hard at the thought. "It's because they, too, have come to realize I am dodging life, that I skate over the surface."

She cried herself to sleep that night. Her career seemed pricked like a bubble; ambition lay dead.

Morning and a good cup of coffee revived her somewhat, but she stayed in bed all day, denied herself heroically to all who begged admittance. She needed the time to think, think, and, besides, her eyes were red.

The second day brought a renaiss-

sance of hope and the forging of a supreme decision.

All right! She'd show the world, show her friends, show her Editor. She'd *live*, get her material first hand, and write her stories with her heart's blood.

She recalled her Russian's words. "You are like Zola." Yes, she would be like Zola, drag herself through the mire, stain her white radiance to enable her to wrest recognition from the world as a fearless soul that had sacrificed its all on the altar of her art. She had known all along something of the sort was expected from those who entered the literary world; it was for this reason she had shielded herself behind her past as implied in the words, "I took ten years to *live* first." Her first success had seemed a warrant of the efficiency of those words to meet the emergency. Her present set back seemed the more tragic for the confidence in herself begotten by her two years' acceptance.

Well—that was all over now. She must begin again. She fingered the manuscript, the return of which had cost so dearly. Then she wept a little more as over her dead self, bathed her eyes in a new lotion that held a vague suggestion of fading gardenias and sent out cards for an elaborate evening.

II

It was six weeks later Thea boarded the train for Atlantic City and as we said before, turned with an almost feverish avidity to the study of her fellow passengers. It would seem that never before had her desire to probe into the souls of others been so overwhelming, so intense. Why was it? It may be that, having suppressed the old tendency so long in following out her new line, she determined now, free from the scrutiny of her immediate friends, to give herself up to her former habit unreservedly.

Or it may be that the six weeks held something Thea was most desperately trying to forget and so gave herself no time for an introspection that might

have proved troublesome in its consequences.

Or, could the difficulty, by any chance, lie in the future, always attem with events? For, after all, a trip to Atlantic City is much more apt to be in the nature of a prologue than an epilogue.

Her Englishman had insisted on seeing her off.

"You look so tired," he said tenderly.

She shook her head wanly. "I might say like Brutus—'I have not slept.'"

Then in a subdued tone that held with its thrill of suppressed intensity, she continued:

*Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.
The genius and the mortal instruments
Are then in council; and the state of
man,*

*Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection.*

Thea's little set went in for quotations and elaborate ones at that. It really was remarkable how much preparation and foraging among musty tomes an "evening" involved, even a *tête-à-tête* for that matter. But wit and spontaneity, like butterflies, should be taken as beautiful things of the moment. Why trace a glorious illusion back to its grubby source? Thea's own words, when accused by some woman of deliberate study for effect. The woman was very plain looking, however, so Thea had forgiven generously the skepticism. "Distinctly of the bourgeoisie. What can her criticism matter?" she had said and displayed from that time on an even greater tendency to poetic lapses.

Thus it was her Englishman saw nothing incogruous in the Pennsylvania station as a Shakesperean set. It was rather poetic, in fact,—Thea on his arm, the surging crowd about them. They had wended their way, meantime, as the lady quoted on, to the car designated on the little green ticket she held in her hand.

She laughed lightly as she finished,

but there was tragic depths in the eyes that evaded his as he made drastic efforts to settle her comfortably.

Then with a sudden realization of a tremble in her voice,

"Thea dear!" he exclaimed, "There's nothing the matter? You're not unhappy?"

But the train was about to start so she dismissed him summarily.

"Shakespeare takes hold of me so," was her only explanation.

"Besides, a letter from my editor I haven't dared open yet," she added as she shook hands. "Good-bye. Yes, in a week! Maybe sooner!"

The letter, Thea knew, was in regard to a new story she had sent in a week before, a story that evidenced strongly her change of line. It had been an emotional, high strung thing, a decided revelation of her new self she was fostering so carefully. It was in direct contrast to her usual delicate, cool, impersonal method of treating life. She felt it was big stuff and did not doubt for an instant the power of the thing to grip. But it was just because it was so intense, so personal in its intensity that she felt strangely ill at ease in subjecting it to the eyes of an outsider. It was—well—as Thea said to herself—like running about without any clothes on right in front of people. And Thea always stickled for the proprieties as embodied in dainty *negligées*.

So it was there was a certain bashful modesty involved in not being able to read that letter from her editor immediately. It seemed the last tightening of a nerve tension, already strained to breaking point by other things totally irrelevant of editors and manuscripts. So she tucked the letter away in her bag, took off her Frenchman's violets and put them out of the sun, marked an article on hypnotism by her Russian in the *New Republic* and then with a sigh of relief as of the putting off indefinitely and perhaps forever of every issue of import in her life, she turned her eyes to the person across the aisle.

It was a man. Why is it the one

across the aisle is so invariably of the opposite sex?

"A lawyer," pronounced Thea to herself.

How did she know? The accident, possibly, of his long legs which showed a tendency to stretch themselves, of his hair so neatly smooth it suggested slipper phrases, of his uplifted arms and interlocked hands that, supporting his head, placed him quite comfortably in communion with the ceiling of the car. Of course, a lawyer! Too easy for Thea! She liked them unamenable to classification, so that there might be a struggle involved before their eventual pigeon-holing.

The woman next the young lawyer was a fashionable dressmaker; the man beyond a professor in a boy's preparatory school. Thea tagged them at once. She didn't need the violin in the rack in front of her to classify her neighbor to the right. It promised, after all, to be a very stupid trip. And just now, when she so needed distraction from herself, from that awful problem that was hovering about in the back of her mind waiting to be dealt with.

No, she would not think. She swung her chair around quickly and with a sudden sharp pang that was half joy and half pain at a desire too quickly fulfilled, she realized that she had found what she was seeking. A girl of perhaps eighteen was sitting in the next chair. As Thea turned she had caught her unawares and glimpsed in the depths of her dark eyes a soul that seemed torn with anguish and suffering. They looked at each other a tense second, then both roused themselves to meet the conventionalities of the occasion.

"Oh, I am so sorry. Did I startle you?" asked Thea.

She made her tone very casual but her heart was beating wildly at the prospect of adventure. No ordinary situation could be responsible for the brooding melancholy the girl was struggling so bravely to hide.

"That's perfectly all right," she managed to answer in a low, constrained

voice and moved her footstool a trifle to make way for Thea's.

"I like riding backward better," said Thea brightly when she was all settled. "The other way seems so—you know—drifting with the tide. Of course one doesn't drift in a railway coach, but you get the idea. It seems a yielding to circumstance, a giving in without a protest to brute force. Now this way I consider I keep my identity, that I—"

Thea was congratulating herself on making out so well on her argument when the girl interrupted.

"Why bother to explain?" she said quietly and closed her eyes.

Thea was taken aback. She would have been angry had it not been that she felt secure in the vantage-ground of her superior intuition. The girl with closed eyes was even more delicious to exploit than she had been before. Thea set to work rapidly to make her points. Well dressed, richly dressed, in fact! Dark and romantic! Hot-blooded, doubtless! No baggage, but something suspiciously fluffy tucked in the Kolinski muff! Of course the conclusion was obvious—a rendezvous.

Thea drew a quick breath. Poor little girl! She saw the whole drama stretching out plainly before her with all it involved of young, ardent passion and recklessness of convention. A lover with eager eyes, an unyielding family and this—a quick decision to take the cash and let the credit go. A day or two at the seashore with the loved one. What mattered anything else? A moment's abandon—and yet! How foolish! How weak! It was because women were ruled by impulse there were so many tragedies in the world. If a woman were old enough to think clearly, make a cold blooded decision with a definite object in view, that were different! She had the justification of going in to the thing actuated by some higher motive or other. But to plunge just from sheer momentary emotion! The sort of thing one expected from the lower classes! It really was disgusting.

Thea roused herself with a certain

indignation, but the quivering of the girl's lower lip reduced her to sympathy once more. No, there was nothing vulgar in this. The thing was a big mistake, that was all, a mistake the girl would regret always and always. If there were some method of saving her! Some way of appealing to her intelligence!

Then inspiration came to Thea. Perhaps this keen intuition that had been given her was really a divine instrument by which she might be able to *save* souls. Previously she had taken her gift simply as a means for securing material for her work. She felt now for the first time the larger responsibility of it. She had a mission, and this little girl trembling so pathetically before her was unquestionably god sent. It was for Thea to point a higher motif in life than mere fleshly gratification. If there appeared an element of incongruity in her being selected on this particular trip as a disciple of self abnegation she swept it aside. After all, life spelt incongruity, so why stumble over a scruple when there was a soul at stake?

Thea looked at her watch. It was eleven o'clock. Two hours more. Not a second to be lost!

She drew a deep breath, leaned forward and began.

"You have been to Atlantic City before?" Banal put to the point. The girl opened her shadowy eyes.

"No!" she murmured.

"It's rather nice," went on Thea, "but it's becoming so much a place for indiscriminate *affaires*."

It was stark, but there was no time for delicate preliminary.

"You go there often?" asked the girl.

Thea stared.

Of course the child meant nothing, but there was rather an ugly gleam in the eyes that met hers quite steadily.

She shook her head sadly as one shorn of all illusions.

"No," she said. "Very seldom. I cannot bear to watch that sort of thing. It is such a dreadful mistake."

The girl turned away slightly.

"I suppose there seems a certain glorious freedom in it to a woman the first time. How few stop to realize what must needs follow!"

Thea had warmed up to her subject by this time and was doing herself full justice. Her wonderful voice had just the right vibratory thrill. She watched the girl before her quivering to its effect and was satisfied.

She went on in low, even tones. "It is never a question of one man. There is always a second, a third, a fourth. And in what, then, is a woman better than her submerged sisters of frank sin?"

The little girl put her hand over her face.

"A woman thinks in the beginning that love is an excuse," Thea went on. "Love, *real* love, would never stoop that way. It's too big, too pure a thing. If a woman consents to an amour it's because there's evil in her, yes, evil. She may cover it up with pretty phrases, fool herself for a while but in the end when it's too late she realizes the truth, that she had been fostering all along not a noble emotion but an ignoble passion that will work to her destruction in the end. All women—" Thea wound up triumphantly—"all women who go in for that sort of thing, whatever their pretext, are bad, absolutely and thoroughly bad."

The little girl roused herself now. She opened her lips as if to speak but was unable through her emotion to force an utterance. The antagonism Thea read in her eyes she set down to the triumph of her own oratory. Naturally, under the circumstances, the girl would resent the truth as it had been presented to her. Well, the keener her resentment, the surer the effect of the words that had caused it. The child would not go to her rendezvous with the same ease of conscience. There was a chance she might not go at all. In the meantime, let her alone for a while, let her think on her sin.

Thea swung her chair around on some pretext or other, and was pleased

to notice the girl made a rush for the dressing-room.

"Tears will do the youngster good," thought Thea, and then resorted to smelling salts as she realized with a terrible sinking of heart that their destination was but an hour away. She closed her eyes and the problem of the little girl faded away, blurred out by the overwhelming one of her own Destiny.

White and strained, Thea sat for the rest of the trip, staring into the future, trying to wrest from it its secrets.

III

"ATLANTIC CITY!"

The words came harsh and grating athwart her reverie. Thea started. The porter seemed to look at her curiously.

"Baggage? Where are you stopping?"

"Oh!" gasped Thea. "I—I'm not stopping. That is, I don't know." Then in desperation:

"I'll carry my bag myself."

The rest was all a wild chaos of impressions—a crowd that jostled, a feeling of stupendous guilt as of one with a scarlet letter on her breast, a fleeting glimpse of the little girl, and then—*his* face scanning eagerly the crowd. The man who had come into her life at its psychological crossroads six weeks ago and who had brought her gradually to *this* as a culmination of their romance.

Romance! Thea shuddered. It had lost whatever claim it had to be that, whatever glamour it ever did possess when brought down to the sordidness of a common rendezvous. The horrid details of the thing as they must carry it through loomed grotesque. The stealthy selection of a small, out-of-the-way hotel, the furtive registering—

He had seen her; the blood pounded back to her heart. And yet, no! The look of joyous expectancy on his face changed. In its stead was an angry bewilderment. What could it mean? He was looking straight at her. She

struggled to twist her lips into a smile. And yet, he was not looking at her but at—

A minute later Thea slipped unseen into the waiting room. Just outside the window there was being enacted an hysterical scene that threatened to block traffic.

With her arms in a death grip about the man's neck the little girl, sobbing wildly, was pouring out her woes regardless of who might hear.

"Oh, father! Father, dear! I couldn't stand it. I read all her letters. You—you left them about in your library. And the other night when I heard you telephone I knew you were going to meet her here and I came down to save you. I couldn't stand her taking you away from me. You've been father and mother to me always. You're so good, and she's bad, bad. She sat next me on the train. I recognized her from the picture you have in your watch. You left it on your bureau one day. And oh! she is so very bad. She told me herself that all women who met men this way—"

Thea stepped out of hearing and tore a leaf out of her note book.

"Renunciation," was the word she wrote, dramatic in its crypticness.

"Give that to the man outside with the little girl who is crying," she ordered a porter, and then stepped quickly into one of the buses that was about to start.

Inside, to hide her trembling confusion, that was half relief as at an abyss escaped, she opened her Editor's letter.

"The story is awful. Why this emotional simoom? Go back to your old line. Yours the charm of a superficiality that must needs dodge real issues to keep its delicacy! You can't make a Tess out of a Peter Pan—"

* * *

At the hotel when she ordered her room, Thea was quite herself with the old unbounded faith in her career and her Destiny.

"A room on the top floor, please, where I can breathe plenty of fresh air and write ad infinitum."



WILD AIR

By Edward J. O'Brien

THE brimming foam of morning
Weaves light across the hill,
Where wistful apple petals
Fall soft, and very still.

And down the curving hedgeway
There runs a little wind
So faintly stirred with music
It leaves a sigh behind.

A spray of song drops idly
In laughter from a cloud.
Wild air weds earth and heaven,
And my heart is loud.

THE CLIMACTERIC

By Christopher Morley

MR. EUSTACE VEAL was a manufacturer of cuspidors. His beautiful factory was one of the finest of its kind, equipped with complete automatic sprinklers, wire-glass windows, cafeteria on the top floor, pensions for superannuated employees, rosewood directors' dining-room, mottoes from Orison Swett Marden on the weekly pay envelopes, and a clever young man in tortoise-shell spectacles hired at eighty dollars a week to write the house-organ (which was called *El Cuspidorado*).

Mr. Veal lived in the exclusive and clean-shaven suburb of Mandrake Park, where he had built a stucco mansion with Venetian blinds, a croquet lawn with a revolving spray on it on hot days, and a mansard butler. Here Mrs. Veal and the two Veal girls, Dora and Petunia, led the blameless life of the embonpoint classes. The electric lights in the bedrooms were turned on promptly at ten o'clock every night, except on the sixteen winter evenings when the Veals occupied their box at the opera. During "Rigoletto" or "Pagliacci" the uncomplaining Mr. Veal would sit in silence with his head against the thick red velvet curtain at the back of the box, thinking up new ways to get an order for ten thousand nickel-plated seamless number 13's from the Pullman Company.

Mr. Veal, hampered as he was by the restrictions of success, was still full of the enjoyment of life. He had written a little brochure on "The Cuspidor: Its Use and Abuse Since the Times of the Pharaohs," which was very well spoken of in the trade. A morocco-bound copy lay on the console table in

Mrs. Veal's salon. It was he who invented the papier-maché spittoon, and the collapsible paper "companion" for traveling salesmen. It was he who had presented a solid silver spittoon de luxe to the King of Siam when that worthy visited the United States. And it was his idea, too, to name the beautiful shining brass model, especially recommended for hotel lobbies, *El Cuspidorado*. This was a stroke of imaginative genius, and several rival manufacturers wept because they had not thought of it first.

The spittoon magnate's habits were regular and sane. He rose by alarm clock at seven. He bathed, shaved, brushed his teeth with the vertical motion recommended by the toothbrush advertisers, breakfasted on cereal and cream and poached eggs, with one cup of strong coffee; walked leisurely to the station, bought a paper, and caught the 8.13 train. He avoided the other men who wanted him to sit with them, took the fifth chair on the left-hand side of the smoking-car, and just as the train started he lit his first cigar. His commutation ticket was always ready for the conductor to punch. He never kept others waiting, just as he hated to be kept waiting himself. After his ticket had been punched and put back into an alligator-hide pocketbook, he opened the paper and studied it faithfully until the train got to the terminal.

At the factory Mr. Veal's routine was equally well-ordered and uniform. At nine o'clock he reached his private office, greeted his secretary, and ran over the morning mail, which had been opened and lay on his desk. Then he went through his dictation, which was

carefully (even if not grammatically) accomplished. The sales reports for the preceding day were brought to him. Then he discussed any matters requiring attention with his department heads, calling them in one by one. At a quarter after twelve he walked up to the Manufacturers' Club for lunch, after which he played one game of pool. He was back at the office by half-past two, and gave his passionate and devoted attention to the salivary needs of the nation until five o'clock. He caught the 5.23 train back to Mandrake Park, sitting on the right-hand side of the smoker where the setting sun would not dazzle on his newspaper.

But one day, about the time of the March equinox, when young ladies put furry pussywillows on their typewriter desks, and bank tellers crack the shells of spring jokes through the brass railings, Mr. Veal's behavior was so peculiar as to cause anxiety among his associates.

He had ridden in on the train as usual, without showing any abnormal symptoms. But when he was next observed, walking down Vincent Street, there was a red spot on his cheekbones and his expression was savage. He entered a haberdasher's shop and asked to see some neckties. When the clerk put out a tray of silk scarves in rich, sober colours, such as are commonly worn by successful and middle-aged merchants, Mr. Veal swore and dashed them aside.

"Good Lord!" he cried, "I'm not going to a funeral! Things like that are worn by Civil War veterans. What do you think I am, seventy years old? Give me something with some snap to it!"

And he chose a lemon-tinted cravat with vorticist patterns of brown and purple. He tore off the dark gray tie he had on and substituted the gaudy new one.

At the next corner he passed a shoe-shop. He hesitated a moment at the plate-glass window, then he entered and glared at the brisk young puppet who came forward with a smirk. He dis-

played his elastic-sided boots of the floorwalker type (which he had worn for years on account of his corns) and asked to have them removed. When they were off his feet he threw them to the other end of the long narrow room. "I want some russet shoes with cloth tops," he said. "And some silk socks to match, the kind the men wear in the magazine ads."

When he left the shop, his feet might have been taken for those of Charley Chaplin, or of an assistant advertising manager of a department store.

II

MR. VEAL reached his office nearly two hours late, and one of his office boys was instantly discharged for asking him whom he wanted to see. Indeed, in a new suit of violent black and white checks, and with a crush hat of velvety substance, he was almost unrecognizable. As he passed through the filing department a hush fell over the young ladies there. His secretary, looking nervously from her corner outside the private office, felt a tingling *scherzo* run up and down the keyboard of her spine. Never before had she seen Mr. Veal wear flowers in his buttonhole, and as he swung the door of his office behind him, she sniffed the vibrating air. In the rich wake of cigar-fragrance always exhaled by her employer, her sharp nostrils detected a new tang—the sweet scent of mignonette. Heavens! Was Mr. Veal using perfume?

Miss Stafford was an acute young woman. She had long been waiting the adroit moment to push her employer for a raise, which was indeed due her. She determined that this was the psychological day. When the sign of the Ram is ascendant in the zodiac, let employers tremble. This is when even the most faithful and long-enduring wage-earner dreams seditiously of a fatter manila envelope. Miss Stafford's typewriter had sung like a zither for a number of years, she had orches-

trated many curious harmonies on it, and now she had reached the point where she was almost as indispensable to the business as Mr. Veal himself. She was carrying what the efficiency dopesters call the peak load.

The buzzer buzzed, and Miss Stafford hastened to the private office, nerving herself to throw cantilevers across the Rubicon.

To her surprise, Mr. Veal, instead of sitting glowering over the morning mail, was standing by the window, throwing a paper-weight in the air and failing to catch it. The sunlight blazing through the large windows seemed to surround his emphatic clothes with a prismatic fringe. To her amazement, instead of the customary brief and reserved greeting, he said:

"Hullo, Miss Stafford. Great weather, eh? Sorry I'm late, but I just couldn't keep my schedule this morning. Went out to buy myself some golf clubs. I think I'd better take up the game, don't you?"

He made a swing at an imaginary golf ball, and slipped on the polished floor, nearly falling down. He recovered himself.

"Here's some flowers for you," he said, taking a bunch of daffodils from the desk. "Daffy-down-dillies, as the poets call 'em. Lovely flowers, hey? Now comes in the sweet of the year. What ho!"

He advanced towards her, and for one extraordinary moment she thought he was about to chuck her under the chin.

"Ask Mr. Foster to come in," he said.

"Mr. Veal," she said nervously, "there's just one thing—I wanted to ask you about, my salary, don't you think, er, I think, it seems to me about time I had a raise. I've been here—"

"Bless my soul," he said. "I never thought of it. Why, of course, you're right. Miss Stafford, how old would you say I am?"

Miss Stafford knew perfectly well that he was fifty-five, but she had learned the cunning of all women who have to

manage men, whether those men be husbands, employers or ticket scalpers.

"Why, Mr. Veal, in a good light and in your new suit, I should say about thirty-nine."

"What are you getting now, Miss Stafford?"

"Thirty dollars."

"Tell Mr. Mason to double it."

The feminine mind moves in rapid zigzags, and Miss Stafford's first conscious and coherent thought was of a certain woollen sports suit she had seen in a window on Vincent Street marked \$30.00.

"And by the way," said Mr. Veal, "when you see Mr. Mason, tell him I've got a new motto for next week's pay envelopes. Here it is; I found it in the paper this morning. I don't know who wrote it—better have him credit it to Orison Swett Marden."

He handed her a slip of paper, on which he had copied out:

*Though I look old, yet I am strong and
lusty;*

*For in my youth I never did apply
Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood;
Nor did not with unbashful forehead
woo*

The means of weakness and debility.

—ORISON SWETT MARDEN (?)

"Before you call Mr. Foster," said the secretary, "Mr. Schmaltz of the Pullman Company is here to see you; he arrived just before you came in. He says he wants to place a large order for the cuspidorados."

"Send him in," said Mr. Veal, chuckling.

"Hello, Schmaltz," he cried, ah the customer entered. "How's this for weather?"

"Great stuff!" said Schmaltz. "Makes us old fellows feel almost young again, doesn't it?"

Mr. Veal's face grew dark. He aged ten years in the instant. He pointed morosely to a chair.

"Mr. Veal," said the other, "we want to place an order for ten thousand of the Cuspidorados. Can you give us the old price?"

"I can *not*," said Mr. Veal shortly. "Materials have gone to the sky. I can't give you the—the old price. I'll give you a young price, a very young one indeed, based on the present state of the market. Eighteen and a quarter cents is the best I can do."

Mr. Schmaltz raised racial hands. "Heavens!" he said, "you used to let us have them for fourteen and a half. Why, in the old days—"

Mr. Veal pounded the desk with his fist.

"If you use that word *old* again, I'll assassinate you with a dish of ham!" he roared. "Great pigs' knuckles, what do you think this is, a home for the aged?"

III

AFTER Mr. Schmaltz had gone, Mr. Veal sent for Foster, the foreman of the manufacturing department.

"Well," he said, "how about those machines?"

"Mr. Veal," said Foster, "we'll have to replace at least six of those Victor stampers. They're so old they simply can't do the work. You know when one of those machines is over five years old—"

Mr. Veal was pointing to the door.

"Get out!" he said.

At lunch time Mr. Veal went up to the club as usual. Swinging up the street, in the bright sun and pellucid air he felt quite cheerful, and stopped to buy himself a rhinoceros cane. In the dining-room of the club he met Edwards, and they sat down together.

"Hello, old man," said Edwards. "You're looking chipper for a veteran. Played any golf yet this year?"

"I don't play," said Mr. Veal.

"Don't you? That's a mistake. It's the only game for us older fellows. Of course we can't score like the youngsters, but still we can get round and have a deal of fun—"

Mr. Veal clenched his fists. Spilling his soup, he leaped up and rushed from the room. He seized his coat and hat, forgetting the new cane, and fled to the nearest Turkish bath.

And all because, when going downstairs in the railway terminal that morning, he had heard a man behind him say to another:

"There goes old Veal! He's beginning to look old, isn't he?"

It was the first time in his life Mr. Veal had heard the damnable adjective applied to himself, in earnest.

Wait until *your* turn comes!



LIFE

By John Hall Wheelock

I HAVE seen a wondrous vision—stars I have seen,
Sunset and moonrise—eyes that laugh and weep—
Millions of faces—and the *one* face I have seen:
The vision falters, and I sleep.



THE ADVENTURESS

By L. M. Hussey

AT the scratching sound below, Mrs. Gilroy awakened from her slumber. Her ears, at least, had not been asleep, but, during the obliviousness of her other faculties, had been listening for this very sound and now communicated it to her mind with the arousing effect of a cold shower. She sat up in bed and waited.

Only a second passed, and the soft scraping, as if from the movement of a clumsy rat, was resumed. It was a sound so slight, remote, so uncertain, that it was audible only because the night was still and all the day-noises of the streets were hushed. But at the resumption of this faint disturbance Mrs. Gilroy slipped over the edge of the bed, put on a peignoir and a pair of slippers and hurried out into the hall. She did not pause at the stairs, but descended them rapidly, with a mechanical precision in her movements that argued an activity to which she was not new. When she reached the lower hall the sound was more manifest; it proceeded from the front door.

She drew the peignoir more closely about her. She stepped to the vestibule door and opened it.

The black splotch of a man was now visible against the glass of the outer door. Mrs. Gilroy gave his figure a second of scrutiny from behind the glass—a formality only, for she had been certain of his identity when first awakened by his fumbling attempts at the keyhole. She then opened the door and confronted him, her husband.

Her head was up, her figure was poised rather magnificently. There was a tenseness, an expectancy in her attitude, as if she were set for a race. She eyed her husband with a touch of

curiosity in her glance. A commingled odour of alcohol and cigars blew in with the night air.

"Here I am!" he said, a certain mellow legato in his voice.

Mrs. Gilroy said nothing. She maintained her expectant pose; she waited for some more characteristic manifestation of her husband's mood.

"I'm a-standing here!" he announced.

This he propounded with great firmness, with even a faint flavour of beligerency. The woman moved back a little and her eyes, catching up the gleams of the outer lights, sparkled with chatoyant fires. Her soft breathing, audible in the stillness of the hall, came with a quickened rhythm. Mr. Gilroy appeared to have come home in his bellicose mood; the next half hour promised excitement.

"Come in," she said.

At the sound of her voice he lifted his face, thrust it forward and peered in at her. A band of light from the street lamp, a little below the house, crossed her face with a pale, luminous diagonal. Her lips were a little parted; her blue, cool eyes looked intently at her husband's face. He stared at her and with the fixity of his eyes a change came over his countenance. The faint, belligerent frown dissolved from his forehead and the droop of his mouth passed into the upward curve of a smile. A beatific blandness overspread his entire face.

"Be-autiful Woman!" he exclaimed, fervidly and caressingly.

He stepped over the doorsill. Mrs. Gilroy drew back into the hall, passing out of the ghostly effulgence that had rested on her like an apparition, dis-

appearing. A little, surprised sigh escaped her. Gilroy was always puzzling! It was never quite possible to be sure of him, although she was sensitive to the mutability of his rummy humours.

He walked into the vestibule and closed the door with a meticulous effort at silence. He tiptoed into the hall and groped his way to his wife. His hand touched her arm; it dropped to her cool fingers; he raised them to his lips with a ponderous gallantry. She accepted his caress; she was motionless in the darkness; a smile on her lips was hidden in the shadow. Gilroy dropped her hand and smiled amorously.

"My Queen Madeleine!" he said.

Madeleine slipped her arm through his.

"You're tired," she whispered persuasively. "Don't you think we'd better go upstairs?"

"Must have a toast first!" Gilroy exclaimed.

The woman laughed softly and her voice was resonated in the silent house to a full volume of tinkling sound.

"You're always bewildering!" she said to him.

She led him into the dining-room. Turning the switch, a suspended globe became luminous; the white tablecloth beneath it sparkled like snow in the first sunlight. The room was filled with a glow, and Gilroy stood blinking at his wife.

She walked to the sideboard, opened the lower cabinet, and removed a decanter and two small glasses. She filled them at the table and held out one to Gilroy. He received it and struck a romantic attitude. His two fingers and thumb, holding the glass, were raised a little above his head, and swayed gently, as if marking a subtle rhythm. The red fluid trembled in the glass. His eyebrows, finely drawn, were lifted over his brown, handsome eyes and his lips smiled, for a moment articulating nothing. He fixed his glance on his wife, and examined her face with a pleased scrutiny. She herself smiled and waited for him to speak.

The glass in his hand swayed through a slightly wider arc.

"I drink this glass," he began, "to the . . . to . . . to a . . ."

He paused and frowned a little; the corners of his mouth turned down. He sought an eloquent word, a luminous phrase to express his emotion.

". . . Be-autiful Woman!" he exclaimed finally.

He put the glass to his lips and drank; Madeleine drank with him.

Then, with a swift movement, she crossed the room and turned out the lights. She was at his side in a second, guiding him by a firm grasp upon his arm. She pushed him through the door, through the hall, started him up the stairs.

"Now we'll go to bed!" she exclaimed.

The swiftness of her strategy bewildered him and he had been assisted to the second floor before he had a second to conceive any grounds for objection. It was useless then to declare himself in opposition to her. She hurried him through the upper hall and into his room. She turned on the lights and helped him to take off his coat.

In a moment he sank on his bed and fell instantly to sleep.

The woman, her hands dropped at her sides, looked down at him. Her lips were shaped into an ironic curve, her eyebrows were a little lifted, her eyes lustrously wide. She drew in her breath quickly.

The sleeping man was incalculable in his alcoholic moods. At all times there was a certain excitement in getting him safely into bed and this was accomplished only by the exercise of superior cunning. As Madeleine stood observing him she experienced a pleasant thrill of victory, that was never absent from these occasions. Still gazing at him, she saw his mouth drop open. Gilroy began to snore. The woman laughed a little, crossed the room and turned out the light. She passed through the corridor into her own room, divested herself of her peignoir and slippers and lay down again. Presently she slept,

this time without any attentiveness for a possible scratching at the front door.

II

GILROY came down to breakfast in a bad humour. He was physically and mentally bilious. He greeted his wife with a scowl, pushed his grape-fruit away from him and gulped several swallows of hot coffee.

"Pleasant day," said his wife dulcetly.

"Madeleine," said Gilroy, "don't try to provoke me. I regret nothing. It's not in my disposition to regret. You don't understand!"

"Understand what?"

"I suppose I wasn't drunk last night?"

"You most emphatically were drunk!"

"You don't approve?"

"Oh . . . of course, I'm delighted!"

"There's no sympathy in you, Madeleine. You don't understand. There's an adventure in getting drunk. It lifts a man out of the commonplace. Very few men can control their mediocrity when they're drunk. The trouble with you is, you have no sense for adventure, no nose for it at all."

He delivered this oratorically, and because he had a great appetite for paradox, it put him in a better humour. He smiled and ate his breakfast with more relish.

"Well, I'll ask you to leave off adventure for tonight," remarked Madeleine.

Gilroy was putting on his overcoat.

"Don't ask me anything," he said.

He smiled, kissed his wife and left the house.

She walked out to the kitchen and had an interview with the maid. She then went upstairs and completed her toilet, that had only been perfunctorily accomplished before breakfast. She put on a blue dress, for some moments stared at herself in the mirror, and then brushed her long hair with slow, mechanical strokes. Finally, she stood up and walked to the window. The morning sunlight, cold and austere, was coming through the curtains.

Madeleine looked out. Men and women were passing hurriedly to work. There was a drabness about their haste, an intentness without enthusiasm.

Madeleine sighed. She was bored and a little melancholy. The sunlight touched her hair, intensifying its heavy lustre, creating a living glow in the dark coils, as if from the vitality of a resident spirit. It fell over her face, her skin became transparent, and the lifeless apathy of her features grew more pronounced. She dropped the window curtain and walked slowly out of the room.

It promised to be a dull day.

It proved to be a dull day. Madeleine was without impulses or desires. One after another she rejected projects that occurred to her. In the afternoon she thought of going out; she dressed, and then decided not to. Later her attention wandered to the evening. A wish to go to the theater possessed her.

She called Gilroy on the telephone, but he was not in his office. Several times she endeavoured to talk to him, but on each occasion he was still absent.

At half-past five the telephone bell rang. Madeleine recognized her husband's voice.

"I've been trying to get you all afternoon," she said.

"Too bad. Madeleine, I called you up to tell you I wouldn't be home for dinner."

"You—"

"Haven't time to explain. Don't expect me."

He hung up; Madeleine stood for a second with the receiver in her hand and then snapped it into its hook.

The prospect of a dull evening alone appeared insufferable. She thought of Gilroy. Evidently he planned more adventure. Madeleine remembered his words at the breakfast table. It seemed to her that her life was forever without incident. For a moment she thought bitterly of Gilroy and blamed him.

A moment later she turned her blame upon herself. She remembered oppor-

tunities, she recollected chances she had ignored. She thought suddenly of a man named Hannum.

Gilroy brought him to the house from time to time. On each occasion Madeleine had correctly interpreted his smile. But she had refused to encourage him, even to the most innocuous flirtation. Once or twice he had called her on the telephone. She conversed with him in frigid impersonality.

Now she thought of him. Essentially he was no more attractive to her in this moment than he had ever been; he had acquired no sudden allure. But Madeleine wanted something to happen. She stood in the hall staring down at the carpet, one foot pushed irresolutely forward. With an impulsive decision she walked to the telephone and searched in the directory for a number.

She found Hannum at his club. She told him her name.

"Mrs. Gilroy! Certainly!"

"You're surprised that I called you?"

"I'm delighted!"

"I don't suppose I should have done so . . ."

"For me it is one of the most pleasant things you could possibly have done."

"I want to ask a favor of you. . . . I'm bored tonight. I have nothing to do!"

"Eh? Nothing to do? The first thing then is to have dinner with me."

"That's kind of you, but I'd rather not. I'd rather you'd call for me and take me somewhere after dinner."

Of course he consented effusively.

Madeleine hung up the receiver with a little shrug of her shoulders. She smiled; she wondered what thoughts were running through Hannum's head. Her call must have been a breath-taking surprise.

She dressed with an increasing expectancy. She employed a finesse in her toilet that was unusual, although she was never precisely a perfunctory person. She touched her hair with deft fingers until its artful waves were artlessly intriguing. She circled her

neck with a band of seed-pearls that seemed a part of her nacreous throat. Standing before a pier-glass, she contemplated herself, a very lovely woman.

The bell rang and she surmised that Hannum had called. She went downstairs and found him seated in the drawing-room. He stood up quickly and she took his extended hand.

He was smiling and, almost like a caress, his eye passed from the heavy glow of her hair to her throat circled with pearls, and to her radiant shoulders. Madeleine felt a little irritated. Hannum was a heavily handsome man, and upon his features was inscribed that curious flavour of a leer that Puritan influence has put into the unaffected and pagan joy of the senses.

"I thought you'd like to take in a show; I've got tickets. We can go somewhere and have a little dance afterward."

"That's exactly what I would like," said Madeleine.

He adjusted her cloak; his fingers touched her. Again she experienced a sensation of annoyance.

His car was waiting outside. They got in and moved off noiselessly through the streets. During the ride Hannum leaned close to her and spoke always through a smile that had something of the artificial unpleasantness of a grimace. Fortunately, he was willing to sustain most of the conversation and Madeleine sat in silence, struggling with a growing disappointment. Her vague expectancy, that had given her a certain, subtle thrill as she dressed, was not being fulfilled. She was glad when they reached the theater.

It was a poor performance. Hannum, observing her ennui, bent close to her at the beginning of the last act and spoke in a whisper.

"This is more or less rotten bad, what?"

"Well, I'm not *very* enthused."

"I'm sorry. I feel the same way as you. Shall we go out and hunt up a little fun?"

"Perhaps it would be more interesting. . . ."

They left the playhouse together.

"Something that slides down easy, a bit to eat, and some Jazz—we'll both feel better," remarked Hannum.

He took her to a popular restaurant. They went up in an elevator shared by another man and a girl. The girl was clinging to her escort with open frankness; her carmined lips were smiling and she laughed. Madeleine wondered what she found mirthful.

They chose a table in the big room, now filling rapidly. In the center was a dancing floor on which fox-trotting was in progress. Brasses blared in the air in rhythmic noise. Hannum ordered cocktails and afterwards insisted on champagne. He smiled with an immense satisfaction as the bottle was pulled out of the ice. The wine frothed in their glasses. Madeleine drank with him and turned a little to look about the room. A man not far distant raised his eyebrows and smiled at her faintly. A tremor, the ghost of a shrug, agitated her shoulders and she turned her eyes elsewhere. She was apathetic; she was disappointed; she was bored.

Hannum praised the wine and she acquiesced without enthusiasm. She was no connoisseur of wines and cared little about them. Once more she examined the people in the room. Her eye was caught by the red-lipped girl who had ascended with them in the elevator. The girl, clinging to the arm of her companion, was walking to the dancing floor. For a moment Madeleine thought her silly, then she envied her vivacity.

She danced with Hannum and was no longer interested enough to feel irritated at his touch. He held her close, and his hand touched her. They went back to their table and Hannum ordered more champagne.

As his glass was filled again, Madeleine looked at him with a start of interest. She noticed the deeper red of his cheeks, the laxity of his lips as he spoke, the glisten of his eye. She made a little toast, drank her glass and urged more champagne upon him. He

returned with a little toast of his own and they drank again.

Madeleine examined his eyes with interest and observed that their glisten had increased; they resembled, a trifle, two glazed porcelain marbles. She encouraged him to speak and a lack of co-ordination between his thought and his articulating muscles was becoming manifest. Madeleine's eyes sparkled and a pleasant thrill passed over her like the tingle of icy water, for she now felt sure that Hannum was getting squiffy.

He was certainly a dull person when sober, but she knew well that men were likely enough to undergo an interesting metempsychosis by alcohol.

As the minutes passed she watched his symptoms with the anxiety of a mother attending a sick child. She smiled upon him graciously, leaning across the little table. She permitted him to touch her white hand as it lay on the cloth. Her cheeks had a faint, tremulous colour and she waited, with fluttering pleasure, for his first manifestation of a definitely new mood. He drank his champagne in the radiance of her smiles.

But his new mood did not come!

He only suffered a declension into an inebriate showing of the mood that had been his from the first.

He exhibited an increasing desire to fondle her, as if she were a kitten. He smiled with flaccid lips.

He leaned toward her grimacing, a cigarette hanging from the corner of his mouth.

Madeleine perceived that she had been in error, but another hope remained. It might take great cunning to get rid of him.

"We must go now," she said.

He stood up obediently. He followed her among the tables to the cloak room. They went down in the elevator and he pressed closely to her side.

The night air came to their nostrils and upon Hannum it seemed to act like more champagne. He staggered across the pavement. With a quick

movement Madeleine seized his arm and guided him to his car.

"Where'll we go now?" he asked.

"We'll take you home!" she said decisively.

He laughed with crapulous idiocy.

She pushed him into the car and directed the chauffeur to drive to his club. In the close, closed quarters of the car Hannum's mouth fell open and he went to sleep. The woman stared at him in angry disappointment. He was utterly uninteresting!

They reached his club and the chauffeur and the doorman helped him up the steps. Madeleine told the man not to bother about her.

"I'll get a taxi," she said.

She went home, staring out upon streets that were hopelessly commonplace.

III

THE house was dark as she entered. She went upstairs and walked through the hall to her husband's room. She looked inside and found it unoccupied. As she turned away she heard an immense pounding at the front door. She stopped, surprised, and listened. The pounding was repeated, with an increased vigour; it resounded through the house like blows upon a huge drum. Her eyes widened, her heart beat faster. She hurried to the stairs and descended.

Gilroy was at the door as she opened it.

His hat was tilted belligerently over his eyes.

"Old Man Gilroy is a-standing here!" he exclaimed, loudly.

Madeleine experienced a warm passing of her blood through her veins as if his voice held a quick stimulant to her heart.

"Come in!" she said.

"Come in!" he thundered. "Don't command me, my woman! I don't take orders—I give 'em."

"You come in!" she repeated.

"You—"

He lurched toward her violently, and

the door slammed to like a report of heavy ordnance. Madeleine perceived his rush in time to escape before his bulk overwhelmed her.

In a thrill of excitement she retreated into the hall swiftly. Gilroy's hat fell off and rolled in front of him like an unwieldy bomb. He stumbled across the carpet, cursing, his hands stretched out and groping, like a blind monster. She could hear his heavy breathing and she drew in her own breath in quick, strong gasps. She stood erect, poised like a waiting Amazon, while the man lurched toward her. She waited until he had nearly reached her and then jumped aside, ran behind him before his bewildered faculties had appreciated her swift dodge, and seizing his coat collar with both hands she shook him to and fro, violently, impetuously, flinging all her strength into her white, virile arms, until his muscles flexed under her bewildering attack and he swayed like a branch in an angry and tempestuous wind. Suddenly ceasing to shake him, she stiffened her arms and pushed him in front of her.

"Get upstairs!" she cried.

She half dragged him up the steps. Inarticulate sounds tumbled out of his fallen mouth. They reached the top and Madeleine shoved him ahead of her through the hall. She flung him into his room and slammed the door upon him.

For a moment she stood outside his door, breathing fast. Then she walked swiftly to her own room. She turned on the light. Her hair had fallen over her shoulders where it caressed the pearl of her skin in lustrous waves. Her eyes were wide and luminous. A carmine flush glowed in her cheeks like the bright stain of red berries.

She smiled and reached back to unhook her frock.

She felt now a languorous content; the saturnine humours of the day had passed from her spirit.

It was an adventure to live with an incalculable man like Gilroy.

Gilroy was one of the most interesting men in the world!

MAN AND BRUTE

By E. L. Grant Watson

Author of "Where Bonds Are Loosed," "The Mainland," etc.

I

DOWN the long white road that leads to Armadale a horseman cantered at a slow and regular pace. On either side of him stretched the limitless scrub of slender eucalyptus saplings. The green and pink leaves of the trees blended to a delicate mauve in the evening light. Overhead, the sky flushed from crimson to orange-yellow as the sun sank behind the bleak and rugged contour of an upstanding hill. That day the horseman had ridden some forty miles across open country, and both he and his beast were tired. Now that he saw the white roofs of Armadale lying clustered together in the valley below him, he urged forward his horse over the soft, sandy road. He had reckoned on reaching the town earlier in the afternoon, but had been delayed on the journey and was now anxious to make up for lost time. Behind him a cloud of dust hung in the still air. The thud of his horse's hoofs and the occasional whistle of a bird were the only sounds that broke the stillness.

When he entered the town he found few people moving in the street, but he shouted to the first man that he met and asked his way to the doctor's house. He reined up for a few moments while the man gave him his directions, then hurried on again.

Half an hour later the doctor drove his sulky at a fast trot over the dusty road. By that time darkness was settling upon the land, night-moving animals were stirring in the bush on either side, and the doctor could see as he drove by the dark forms of wallabies

crouching in the grass. The first miles, over the made road, were easy going, but then difficulties arose. The track into the bush on the right was hard to find, and when found was not easy to follow.

Dr. Laurence was a man unused to the wild life of bush country. He had only lately come from Sydney and he was always a little nervous of crossing open scrub after dark. To his unaccustomed eyes, bushtracks were difficult to follow at the best of times, and now, when he turned off the road, he had to keep all his wits about him and not let his horse stray into the open spaces of the bush, which stretched out in grey glades and avenues on either side. Often he had to climb down from his seat and make sure of the track by the light of his side lanterns. It was necessary here to go at a slow pace, for the ground was uneven and the way was often blocked by dead timber that lay rotting where it had fallen. At one time he was even minded to turn back, but being a kind-hearted and generous man, he pushed on in spite of difficulties. The thought of the disabled shepherd, solitary and suffering, kept him to his resolution.

After a laborious hour of slow traveling, he came to the wire fence of which the horseman had spoken. In front of him he could see an open stretch of salt-bush country—bare, open ground covered by stunted white-leaved bushes. Away on the left he could see the dark line of the trees. They looked massive enough in the darkness, but he knew that, like most of the Australian bush, they grew sparse and feathery on the dry soil.

While he was tying up his horse he became conscious of the extreme stillness of the night. Now that the wheels of the sulky no longer crunched their way over dead branches, he suddenly felt the silence as if it were a concrete and tangible thing. The trees around him were very still; they seemed to wait in suspense as if afraid of rustling their leaves. His horse breathed long, hot breaths. There was no other sound but the cracking of a twig under his own foot. As he lifted down his bag he had a slight regret that he must leave the friendly companionship of his horse. In that wild, uncultivated land they both seemed such insignificant and lonely creatures that he felt it imprudent that they should separate.

The night was cloudless, and overhead the sky was rich with glittering stars. No moon shone, but in the starlight the stunted salt-bushes looked like a sea of grey wool which spread flat to the far horizon, where it mingled with the darker tinted depths of the sky. As the doctor forced his way forward he disturbed numberless bandicoots and wallabies, which scuttled or leapt hurriedly away. The earth underfoot seemed to be swarming with life, and this he felt to be strange, for often in the daytime had he ridden across such open stretches of country and had been surprised at the absence of animal life. But now, at night, everything was changed—life was more vigorous and more potent. He was conscious of an all-pervading power that brooded over the land and which lent to it a quality of poignancy and sweetness that he had never before tasted. He was glad then that he had come; not only glad to be on an errand of mercy and performing his duty, but glad also to flavour in this unexpected way the rich sweetness of the hushed and vigorous earth.

For some distance he walked on, keeping always in sight of the line of trees on the left. Then he stood still and shouted. His voice sounded for a moment very resonant and strong in the night air. The sound died abruptly

as if lost in the silence. He listened for an answering shout, but heard nothing. Perhaps he had kept too far out in the open. He struck in towards the trees, and walked half a mile further; again he shouted, but got no answer.

Again he walked on a short distance, then suddenly he saw the shepherd's hut quite close to him. He was surprised at finding it so close and was alarmed that there should have been no answer to his call. He hurried forward, and as he approached saw that the door was standing ajar. He could see that inside the hut a light was burning.

The silence, which at first had awed him, but which later had seemed invigorating and refreshing, was again touched with fear. The small building, surrounded as it was by low bushes and the flat expanse of desolate plain, looked strangely insignificant. So small an evidence of man's energy in the face of Nature's greatness was, in the all-enfolding silence of the night, disheartening and almost pathetic. The doctor wondered what had happened in the last few hours in that tiny space—why had he received no answer to his call, which at that distance must have been clearly audible? Had he, perhaps, come too late? He hurried anxiously forward and laid his hand upon the door.

II

FIVE hours previously the horseman, who was to fetch relief to the sick man, had galloped away and the old shepherd and his dog had looked at one another as they listened to the sound of his departing horse's hoofs. As their eyes met they were both conscious of their sudden loneliness. The dog shifted his gaze uneasily and looked round the hut; it was a small protection indeed, a tiny island of man's foothold in the midst of the wide expanse of bush that stretched in all directions. On the ceiling of the hut numberless flies were crawling; others made a monotonous buzzing in the hot air. The shepherd lay still upon his bed, crippled

by his sudden illness. After a while he stretched out his left hand, which he could still use, and rested it awkwardly upon the dog's head.

"Rover," he muttered, "you'll stay with me. You'll stay with me till help comes. I'm ill, boy. Maybe I'm dying. I can't be left alone."

The dog thrust his nose into the man's hand and whined. Then he jumped up, putting his forepaws on the bed and licked at his master's face.

The man moved with difficulty to hold him off; then groaned at a stab of pain.

"Get down! Get down!" he said gently.

For more than an hour the old shepherd lay still, and the dog rested his shaggy head against his hand. The light slowly died out of the sky and the silence became complete as the flies gathered upon the walls and ceiling of the hut and ceased to buzz. The sick man lay awkwardly upon one side as if twisted by pain. Half his body was paralyzed, and the features on the right side of his face were drawn and motionless. From time to time he would give a low groan, and the dog, as if understanding his master's distress, would thrust his nose forward and give a whine of sympathy.

When it became dark, the shepherd with some difficulty managed to light the lantern that the horseman had placed by his bed. Then he reached for water, drank a little and offered some to the dog, who licked intelligently and gently at the rim of the cup. Then, exhausted by this effort, the man lay back with a sigh. For a while he watched the flickering shadows that the lantern cast on wall and ceiling, and all the while he spoke incessantly to the dog. He repeated himself, saying over the same thing again and again.

"You must stay with me, Rover. You must stay with me."

He spoke quickly and incoherently, and as he spoke the muscles of the left side of his face moved nervously. To go on speaking had now become a ne-

cessity. The idea obsessed him that he must not be silent, for a new-awakened fear was pressing upon his heart. He felt one side of his tongue and mouth to be becoming stiff, and he found it difficult to articulate. What if he should lose his power of speech?

That thought was terrible, and he babbled on, glad to assure himself that he still had the power of forming words.

The dog beside him whined in response and seemed to understand the fear which engendered that meaningless stream of sound. He jumped up and licked the man's face.

The shepherd muttered incessantly and watched the dog with eyes overflowing with tears. The dog, as if in an ecstasy of sympathy, raised himself and put his great paws on his master's chest. Then he howled, a long, sustained howl expressive of all that sorrow which can witness the suffering of another but does not know how to lessen or alleviate that suffering.

After that, there was silence in the hut and the hours crept slowly by.

III

THE man lay helpless, watching the great beast that loved him and suffered for him. Often their eyes met, but never for more than an instant, and then, as if embarrassed and ashamed at his master's weakness, the dog would look away, gaze uneasily into the corners of the hut and then hurriedly glance back again.

Then, as the shepherd watched his old friend and companion of many years, he saw a strange change come over him. He saw him stiffen his paws, saw the hair on his back rise up and bristle and saw his lips twitch and the whites of his eyes roll and shine. He remembered how he had once before seen him like that. It was years ago, when the dog was young. They had been together on a hillside and there was mist rising from the valley. He had been sitting by his sheep when the dog had suddenly bayed and had stood

in just such an attitude gazing out over the valley and growling. Step by step he had come back to his master and then crouched against his legs shivering with terror. That was the coming of fear.

The two occasions were similar. Fear like a gust had struck the dog's heart, fear of the abnormal, fear, perhaps, of the hidden and inexorable cruelty of life. And the man, as he lay there helpless, understood and remembered, and he also became afraid.

To both man and dog something malevolent had been revealed. Inside that small hut life had suddenly shown itself naked and ruthless. Outside, where the grey salt-bushes afforded cover to wallabies and night birds, existence was still, no doubt, the same, was still covered by that opaque veil that blinds and deceives; but within those walls there was madness, the madness of sudden understanding, the madness of fear.

The dog was now very still; he crouched close to his master, occasionally giving low growls. As the old shepherd watched him he felt the presence of something uncanny and distasteful. Now that his body was powerless, his mind swarmed with disquieting recollections of his earlier life, and particularly he remembered an incident that had happened in the hot months of a dry-season. The bush was parched with thirst and dead animals were a common sight. He had come one day upon a round mouse's nest, which lay exposed among the withered grass. On opening it he had found two starved mice. They were alive, but horribly thin; they moved their limbs slowly and senselessly; on their fur were patches of the yellow eggs of flies. He remembered how he had killed them and was horrified at his task. Now his dog reminded him of those mice. He remembered the pathetic savagery of their exposed yellow teeth.

Suddenly a cry sounded not very far distant.

To the man it was a message of hope.

Help was coming! This nightmare of terror and isolation might pass!

He tried hard to articulate, to shout, but the cry that came from his lips was hardly audible.

He tried to raise himself, but failed and fell back, his muscles twitching uncontrollably.

In one leap the dog was on his feet. And now he was rigid, each foot seemed stiffly rooted to the ground. His back was arched, the hairs bristling and upright. His teeth were bared. All his savagery and fear showed in his eyes. If in the close confines of the hut there had been engendered madness and fear, savagery now came to join them. The ugliness of brute ferocity stood hunched upon four legs, rooted to the earth, bristling with terror.

Another shout sounded, this time nearer; then light footsteps were to be heard approaching. The dog quivered through his whole body. His lips, drawn back, exposed the long canine teeth. The door creaked on its hinges and was pushed slowly open. The doctor, fresh from all the mysterious beauty of a summer's night, stepped into the hut.

With stiff movements, like those of the starving mice, the dog arched himself, lowered his head and tail and took short, cringing steps sideways and forward. Then with a snarl of fear and rage he leapt at the man's throat.

Dr. Laurence, who was for the moment slightly blinded by the lantern light, threw up his arm to guard his face. The dog's jaws fastened above his wrist and the strong teeth pressed their way through his coat and pierced the flesh. The first impact of the attack knocked him backwards and he was pinned against the wall of the hut. The sudden shock scattered for a moment all his thoughts, and for just a small fraction of time he was bewildered and almost helpless beneath the weight of the dog. The action of throwing up his arm to guard his throat had been instinctive rather than purposed. In the next instant, however, all his senses

rallied and his mind was quick to take in the situation. The dog was, of course, guarding his sick master and his attack was not one of ignoble savagery, but merely an over-zealous loyalty.

The man's reason was able, even in the shock of those first few seconds, to take in the facts of the case. He could see that the shepherd was lying powerless on his bed; he could hear his hoarse and inarticulate whispers, and realized that the sick man could give no help and that he must cope with the dog singlehanded. He must struggle with him and throttle him off; and he would do so as humanely as possible, understanding as he did the loyal nature that prompted that mistaken savagery.

Steadying himself against the wall, he forced his adversary further from him and gripped at his shaggy throat with his left hand. He had to set his teeth hard against the pain which shot up his arm as the dog savagely shook his head from side to side.

With great difficulty he struggled and fought his way across the room. His purpose was to get the dog against the wall and there throttle him from his hold. This was difficult to accomplish, as the great beast struck out with his forefeet at the doctor's face. The man had to bend his head forward and duck it to one side to avoid these swift, savage strokes. It was thus that his face came close to his enemy's. He saw the rolling whites of the dog's eyes, the bare, pink gums and the writhing lips. The intense savagery of that expression was in some way strangely familiar and the light in the dog's eyes kindled the man's excitement, made his heart beat faster and roused him to the highest animation of nervous force. He was by this time taking deep, short breaths through his nostrils, his lips were tight shut and his teeth locked. He was beginning to get angry at the sharp wrenches of pain that shot up his arm as the dog flung his weight from side to side.

At length he won his way to the opposite wall; his fingers were strongly

gripped about the hot, pulsing throat. In spite of the pain in his arm, he held it high, and thrust with all his force against the wall. He watched the eyes of the dog open and shut in quick succession and heard his breath come in long, irregular gasps. He felt the grip on his arm relaxing, but just when he thought he had the beast powerless there was a sudden spasmodic movement, the dog struck upwards with his hind legs and, with a quick jerk, shook himself free.

The doctor turned quickly to face him and at the same time looked round for a weapon. He saw the shepherd's staff standing in a far corner. The dog at once anticipated his thought and leapt between. They faced each other wary and alert. The man's former attitude of calm deliberation had left him. His activities were now all involved in the fierce struggle.

The eyes of both man and brute shone with anger and the muscles of the man's face twitched. Behind him he was vaguely conscious of the crippld shepherd blinking and inarticulate; round about him were the narrow walls of the hut which shut him in with that snarling grey devil. He stepped back towards the bed, hoping to lure the dog from his position and thus be able to reach the shepherd's staff. In an instant the dog was upon him, this time leaping for his thigh. Again they locked, but the dog's hold was not so tenacious. He bit and leapt free. The man cursed at the pain and ran in fiercely, striking with his fists.

The shepherd, who lay helpless on his bed, watched with horror the progress of the fight.

When, at first, he had seen the dog spring and the doctor ward off the attack, he had been filled with a pathetic and helpless distress. He was horrified that the man who had come those many miles to his aid should be thus outraged; and yet, though one word from him was all that was needed, he was powerless. He had struggled with all his failing powers to speak the necessary words, but all that he could

do was to form an inarticulate and choking sound, which seemed to urge the dog to keener fury. That the doctor had so calmly withstood the first attack had given him some assurance; but now as they faced each other, angry man and angry brute in that small space, his spirit was touched with a new fear—a fear that was even stronger than the dread of his growing helplessness. He felt despair at the sudden revelation of the untamed fierceness of life, a fierceness that could even stretch out and envelop man himself, could strip from him his reason and could turn to frenzied cruelty the calm glance of his eye, and reveal the brute from which he was evolved.

The two creatures, that in the small, dimly lighted room fought with such ferocity and cruelty were strangely similar in their movements and expression. Savagery, an intense interest and even a delight in the struggle, showed in every pose of the body, in every nervous contraction of the face. In the numbing terror of his own infirmity, the shepherd saw that they gloried in and enjoyed the naked fierceness of the fight. While he had lain there helplessly watching he had seen how the doctor's expression had changed from calm and manly determination to aroused, though controlled, anger; from anger to exasperation and rage; and then he had seen how rage had grown into the whining, hysterical joy of conflict.

Two brutes fought in that room beside the crippled man. Motives of loyalty, generosity and mercy had prepared the way for the contest. Hidden and unsuspected forces, blind and cruel, had stripped first one, then the other of reason; and the mind, that had the knowledge and power to avert that loosing of the bestial which lurks in all nature, was held ironically dumb. Man and dog, each in the grip of the mad excitement of killing, bit and struck at one another. Both were cunning at attack and parry. The dog, after the first furious onslaught, contented himself with sudden rushes, snapping bites

and quick retreats; the man tried all ways to drive his adversary to some corner, where, gripping at his throat, he would be able to strangle him, crushing him with his greater weight. For what seemed an interminable time the dog was able to escape the swift, downward strokes of the man's fists or the sudden lift of his boots, and on each occasion that he sprang free he snapped fiercely at hands or legs, leaving the doctor bloody and torn, but in no way checked in that deliberate and relentless pursuit.

The shepherd's eyes, filled with his speechless fear, followed always the quick dash of onslaught and recovery. He had seen the human reason of the man's face shrink and become replaced by the passion of a brute. He was strangely affected by the sight; affected, too, by the knowledge that both of the combatants were now oblivious of his existence. He was cut off and alone; and all that was left of human dignity and restraint had found refuge in his powerless body and there hid in fear, unable to show themselves.

With an effort of mind, he could imagine the hushed stillness of the bush, that he knew so well, which stretched, grey and tranquil, in all directions. He could picture the outside view of his own hut. How often had he seen it as a small dark speck in the evening light? It had been full of pleasant associations and surrounded by recollections of comfortable evenings and meals hungrily enjoyed. But now within those walls raged a pandemonium of savagery and hate. They were filled by the abnormal, by such a ferocity as even beasts feared. For what beast of prey even does not look up full of shame after a savage act? It looks fearfully around and hurries away with its kill.

The sick man as he watched saw that a sudden change came over the fight, and instead of the quick movements from side to side he could see that the doctor had caught the dog in a corner, had his hands at its throat and was crushing it under his weight. The shep-

herd watched with horror the look on the man's face. Exuberant, triumphant beast was there written large. There was cruel joy, the joy of mastery, the joy of killing. He looked at the dog's face and saw fear gleam in those fierce eyes. The eyes rolled from side to side, blinked horridly and then, with a despairing glance, looked at him. In them there was an appeal for help; and in that despairing look he recognised his friend and companion of many days and nights. His dog, his friend, was there helpless and dying. If he could speak he might wake the doctor from that horrid seizure of atrocious joy. If that were once broken the man would see there was no need to kill—the dog was done, played out.

With all his ebbing strength the shepherd lifted himself on his left elbow and with a desperate effort tried to shout. His heart seemed to be beating in his throat so that no breath could come, his tongue clicked helplessly, his eyes rolled, and, exhausted, he fell back.

As the doctor's fingers tightened in that final grip he understood for the first time in his life the joy of killing, the frank and shameless joy of the stronger which throttles what is weaker and less able to live—a sensation compelling and primitive. It was with supreme elation that he saw fear and defeat creep into the dog's eyes, and not till long after the breath had ceased to be drawn through the expanded nostrils did he relinquish his hold. That joy of killing as it died down gave place to a sudden knowledge of the surrounding quietness.

In spite of the hammering of his own blood in his ears and the short gasps of his own breath, he became conscious of a great stillness. And as the ham-

mering became less insistent, the surrounding quiet seemed to creep in from the untamed, peaceful expanse of the Australian bush. It invaded the small dimensions of the hut and even seemed to force its way into his own brain. He loosed his grip and raised his hands to his face. The body of the dog fell back with a thud. The man muttered something under his breath about having done for the brute, and was surprised at the sound of his own voice.

He looked round, again listening to the stillness. On the ground near the door he saw his bag of doctor's instruments. On the bed the shepherd lay very still. At that sight the doctor remembered the whole circumstance of his visit; how that the poor fellow had been paralysed, and he recollected with a shudder the look of agony in his eyes. That was when that damned brute had flown at him.

He shakily rose to his feet and again looked round. His arms and even his body were much bitten and he became conscious of pain.

He sucked at his torn hands, then for a time was motionless as if enchanted by the quiet of the night. He felt he must break that spell.

Deliberately and with conscious effort he walked across to the bed where the sick man lay. The shepherd's eyes, filled with horror and despair, stared glassily into his own. The doctor, as if to protect himself from that glance, covered them quickly with his hand. They did not flinch at his sudden movement. Mechanically, as if compelled by long habit, he bent his head to the man's chest, listening for the heartbeats. He could hear no sound. The silence of that desolate land was all-pervading.



IT'S AN ANNOYING THING TO BE ABSENT-MINDED

By Charles S. Zerner

IT'S an annoying thing to be absent-minded. It has caused me a great deal of discomfort.

I once fell in love. Her name was Margaret. Margaret could only love a hero. She told me so. I had never figured conspicuously in any melodramatic event, and as a bookkeeper in the office of a shoe factory the future offered few opportunities for the manifestation of my courage. I therefore resolved to make my own.

I invited Margaret to go canoeing. It was a dark night, and when we reached a still darker spot on the lake, I suggested that we change seats. While do-

ing so I managed to place the paddle between Margaret's feet and twist it so she would lose her balance.

My plan worked. Margaret fell in the water with a fine splash and a wild shriek for help.

"Fear not, Margaret," I called in the best Shakespearian rhythm I could muster. "Remember, I am near you!" I cried, yanking off my coat and posing for the leap to rescue Margaret.

But an unusual thing occurred. I suddenly remembered that I couldn't swim.

It's an annoying thing to be absent-minded.



TRYST

By Margaret Widdemer

UPON a golden time before,
When evening would begin,
I would come laughing to your door,
And you would let me in:

O sleep you sound, dear heart and true,
Lest on some rain-tossed eve
My soul come sobbing back to you
And you should wake and grieve!

THE SINISTER SEX

By Ben Hecht

I

A SPIRITUAL dyspepsia was upon Ballard McArthur. Thus his soul was lean and yellow. There are some men who are able, because of a peculiar capacity for illusion, to look upon life and perceive it to be a roaring and fascinating affair. Give them a smile from a long-legged ape of a woman with a pair of shining eyes and they walk about with their chests out, and tap their cigarettes on the backs of their hands before lighting them, and exhibit a gusto incomprehensible to one face to face with the ultimate nothingness of things, incomprehensible to Ballard McArthur.

A curious race, these men. Bustling about their business as if it all meant something or mattered a whoop! Primping and grimacing before women as if there was something, some great and luxurious twist to *that*! Planning and scheming about these women, fencing, intriguing and giving vent to violent excitements as if there was something unusual and mysterious about the business!

The soul of Ballard McArthur, when it had passed its thirty-fourth year, grew leaner and yellower. He had his philosophy. Indeed, given a vocabulary, he might have put Schopenhauer to shame. But although his adjectives were few and dependent chiefly upon the Deity for their punch, his manner was complete, his bearing left nothing in doubt. It was his custom to hold brief and cosmic conversation with Padraic Rafferty, the white-aproned adjutant presiding behind the bar off Runson's Café. At five o'clock each

afternoon McArthur presented himself for the ministrations of Padraic Rafferty, fortifying himself for his evening's work with two shots of Bourbon and eight minutes of joy-shattering and illusion-smashing converse.

The theme of this daily dialogue was usually no less a matter than Life, with Woman as a sinister side issue. Concerning Life, Ballard McArthur held forth in words of arresting finality. Concerning Woman his discourse was ever primitive and unbeautiful. That the ladies were all alike and that all of them were bad was The Ballard's pithy argument. And having delivered himself thereof and wiped his lips, it was his wont to progress with the indifference of a man deaf, dumb and blind through the smear of tables, drinkers, waiters and bus boys that crowded the flamboyant interior of Runson's Café at 5.30 each afternoon. Then, seating himself at the piano, he nodded curtly to the violin and clarinet, invariably on the job ahead of him. He threw back his head, his eyes fastened with stoical calm upon the torso of a nymph stenciled with other decorations high on the wall, and then he cut loose.

There was about the nightly performance of Ballard McArthur at the piano in Runson's Café a precision of touch, an infallibility of tempo which stamped him as a man of accomplishments. And, in fact, in Ballard's repertoire there were no distinctions. A Chopin valse or "The Livery Stable Blues," a thing from Brahms or one of the rollicking cacophonies of his own invention, "Hearts and Flowers," "The Spring Song," "The Boyards' March," the "Humoresque," the "Danse Macabre,"

the latest hit in rag and the oldest concert knockout, he played them all—a lean and immobile mandarin of the piano. They were, these tunes, part and parcel of the ultimate nothingness of things, the monotonous obbligatos to which a world drank beer, nibbled club sandwiches, fourflushed about the labels and the temperatures of wine bottles, and disported itself with a mysterious though pathetic zeal on the dance floor space between the tables from 5.30 until one, when a benevolent municipality released him, Ballard McArthur, from further duties.

Such cynicism as was McArthur's is not achieved casually and as one acquires a knowledge of the distance from Zenia, Ohio, to Passadumkeag, Maine. A vast schooling is necessary, a close attention to detail, a constant application to the business in hand. And in achieving his attitude toward life McArthur had not leaped at conclusions. Rather had these conclusions overtaken him. And thus The Ballard's cynicism was not the cynicism of callow and pompous youth—the out-of-tune vibrations of a vacuous vanity! It will only add to the unnecessary detail of this record to dwell even with caution upon The Ballard's past. Let it be known that he had with painstaking effort tasted of this and of that, loved here and loved there, graduated from the agitations of adolescence, that he had, in short, as the romanticists put it, lived. And that at thirty-four his soul was indeed an encyclopedia of experience, his heart a mausoleum of as many emotions as it is given a man with an undeveloped vocabulary to experience.

And having thus taken The Ballard's unsavory and disillusioning past for granted, and having touched lightly upon the characteristics of the present which somewhat distinguished him above the rank and file of pianobodies, we arrive fresh and open for further information at a rather difficult twist in the dyspeptic evolution of McArthur's lean and yellow soul. He fell in love. By this is not meant that he underwent a birth of raptures and de-

sires, a rejuvenation of jaded corpuscles. To one privy to the intricate idiocies of sex, profoundly grounded in the ultimate nothingness of things, love does not come in the guise dear to the new and old O. Henrys.

It was a night in April when she appeared beside The Ballard's piano, a sheaf of music in her hand and a curious timidity in her eye.

"I'm Dolores," she said, holding forth the music, "and I'm to sing here."

McArthur turned and confronted a young woman dressed with an almost exaggerated modesty, wide-eyed, dark-haired, oval-faced and hesitant. For a moment she stared with a strange intensity at McArthur.

"Mr. McArthur," she faltered, "you are Mr. McArthur? Here . . . is my music."

The Ballard experienced a sudden and inexplicable irritation. Something about the creature speaking to him thus for the first time leaped out and entangled itself in his emotions. He returned her stare, accepted the music from her and slapped it into place on the piano.

"All right," he said and wheeled about on his stool.

Dolores' début in Runson's Café was attended with more than the normal success in such matters. There was about her a charm, a certain quaint anachronism, for she was, or affected to be, timid. She sang in a sweet round voice, such as is sometimes revealed by a maiden performing for company in the parlor of her parents' home. Runson's, while not a rendezvous of evil, was yet accustomed to other things. The mischievous abandon of young women who sang sly songs and kicked up their dresses at the proper intervals, who flashed stockings and adroit lingerie, who winked their eyes and pouted with their lips had invariably been part of the entertainment provided. And so, by the simple device of concealing her legs and her throat and by the added ruse of neither winking nor pouting, Dolores arrested the attention of her audience.

The success of her début was repeated night after night, and as is the case among a people secretly addicted to pious thoughts, the creature's modesty and virtue became more than her other talents a topic for conversation among those who ate, drank and danced in Runson's. Her age was also a matter of beguiling mystery. To men with bald heads she was eighteen. To men more weighted with hair and less with years she was all of twenty-one. To women she was twenty-five if a day. To Ballard McArthur she was an ageless irritating verification of his cherished theory that all women are born idiots and suffer a rapid decline from the day of their weaning.

For The Ballard had not yet become aware that the emotions Dolores aroused within him were the cramped and distorted heralds of love. Night after night he played her accompaniments, listened with a critically unmoved ear to her round, almost lisping voice, and wondered mildly how she had ever drifted into the business. Concerning the modesty and virtue which had distinguished Dolores from the first, he passed through several cynical attitudes. His keen eyes had noted the absence of jewelry and had been startled once by a glimpse of the most depressing of all sanities, cotton stockings. Nevertheless, he held out.

Things in this unnecessary world are not always what they seem and all that is gilded is not gold. A ripe philosophy, if somewhat withered in spots. And yet McArthur found himself more and more engaging in a sort of dual monologue. There was a part of him which continued cold and unmoved by the evidence. And there was a part of him which took note of the fact that spring had come into the city, that the sun shone vividly upon the great buildings, that cotton stockings after all argued either an absence of taste or a presence of super virtue, and that the clarinet and the violin had been rebuked without hysteria for certain cynical overtures.

II

THE throes of love's maturing are of interest chiefly to old maids. They have neither the psychology nor the logic which appeals to a thinking, seasoned reader. We pass them by, saluting them with an all-wise smile, and arrive at a night late in May on which certain events important to this record transpired.

It happened, as such things sometimes do when a man's nature is in conflict with itself, that The Ballard was loitering without the Café long after the hour appointed for his work. A desire which he refused to admit to himself kept him from quitting the pavement. Dusk had fallen. The lights of the city were beginning to write their yellow script in the air. People were streaming by in endless little syncopating groups. McArthur kept his eye upon them, an eye which waited, aye hungered, for a blue hat with a ribbon about it and a pair of familiarly wide, dark eyes. The Ballard's innermost and uppermost emotion was guilt, savage, desperate guilt. The flush of shame crept in and out of his cheek, the warmth of indignation vivified his spirit. In vain did he offer soft and delicate vindications to himself.

Walking almost hidden in the crowd, he spied her and by the leap and the inane convolutions of his thought he knew with the clarity that comes to men doomed that he, McArthur, was lost.

"I would like," he said as she paused beside him, "to take you home tonight, if you don't mind."

An eager little smile moulded the lips of the woman into a crescent. She would not mind. She would be pleased. And clearing his throat in lieu of further speech, The Ballard watched her enter via the ladies' entrance, himself darting in for the belated ministrations of his friend, Padriac Rafferty. The daily dialogue this time, strange as it may appear to the untutored, was more violent and acrimonious than ever. McArthur outdid himself. Several of

the thirsty, sensing diversion, mouched over along the bar and contributed an attentive ear. But even as he talked, cursed and fumed against things as they were and were not, there was in McArthur an unreasoning elation. There was in him the Spring which eternally threatens all men, whatever the condition of their soul. And later, at the piano, McArthur banged out the fandangoes of the dance, ripped through the snorting syncopate, with a gusto not easily to be reconciled in a man so profoundly grounded in the ultimate nothingness of things.

As he played this time the music entered The Ballad's head, and raced from cell to cell after his thought, entangling it, confusing it. And what The Ballad thought, although perhaps immaterial as a contribution toward the progress of the race, will bear recording. For it was strange thought, all things considered. It was thought of Dolores who sang, the Dolores of the photograph rack outside the Café, of smiles that might illumine the eyes of Dolores and curve her lips in a manner remarkably fetching. It was thought of the miracle of encountering modesty and charm after so many years of disillusion, of discovering a woman who had escaped the disgusting and natural heritage of her sex—deceit and vanity.

Forgotten as if made of mist and blown out of existence by a puff, the cynicism of April. Dead the shrewd, tongue-in-cheek attitude of February. And the memories which might have warned, might have pointed their sapient fingers into the future, were likewise strangely dormant. Here was a woman above all other women, a creature pure and noble, to whom sin was a word and no more and to whom life was the caress of sweet thoughts and gentle virtue. Somewhat garbled, to be sure, these meditations. But Ballad McArthur played them on the piano, sang them in his heart and smiled them upon the torso of the nymph stenciled high above his head. Thus do the mighty fall, thus the Cæsars of cyni-

cism shed their hard-earned laurels.

There is, in the streets of the city after midnight, a loneliness as corrupting as the silence of country lanes. And there is about the moon which kindles its ghost faces in the windows of many buildings a seduction as potent as the silver which ravishes the seashore in the night.

The Ballad's fingers had closed upon the fingers of his companion and without words they walked on and on. And because only of the physical law that all journeys must end, they at length ceased their walking and took to standing in front of a little wooden house that crouched in the shadows. Here it was that Dolores lived. Here they remained standing and what happened happened, and what was, was.

"Dolores," whispered the McArthur, the erstwhile saturnine McArthur, "Dolores, Dolores, I never thought I'd love like this. But you're so different."

But why eavesdrop upon the great and inevitable inanity? There are some scribblers who reveal an almost loathsome morbidity in such matters. With deliberate elation they chatter of caresses and phrases, of vows and activities sacred to the idiocy of the race. We pass on, averting the eye, sealing the lips. Truly there are some things which no self-respecting realist of records will suffer to come between him and art. And thus we touch with a deft tolerance upon this night and upon subsequent nights, upon these kisses and upon their inevitable repetitions. The McArthur was lost. In his ears sang the angels, in his heart the seraphim rioted, in his eyes were ever sunsets and sunrises and the will o' the wisp colors of illusion. At the piano his fingers betrayed their long training and stumbled. His chords leaped forth violent and confused. There was love in his heart.

III

FOR a month such things as have been hinted at endured and increased. Alone in the hotel he had inhabited for five

years, Ballard McArthur communed with himself. The wariness which had at first succeeded in tempering his flights of communing was now another part of the past. Over and over he communed concerning his great fortune, his undeserved fortune. And through the cadenzas of his communing ran always the note which sounded most sweetly in his soul. There were exceptions to the theory he had in his misery achieved. There were women like Dolores. There was Dolores.

It was well along in June that McArthur's brain entered the situation. From some limbo emerged the idea of marriage. This was foreign matter for The Ballard to speculate upon. It had the allure of novelty, the fascination of all unknown things. And above all it appealed vigorously because of its simple and practical nature. To think, for McArthur, was to act, and the proposal with its "Yes" marked a new stage in his emotions.

Two days thereafter he was seated in the modest parlor of the modest rooming house in which Dolores lived. He had persuaded the manager at the Café to give him a two weeks' respite and Dolores had received a similar vacation. They were, on this evening, discussing the future. Ah, this future! It was a topic to which McArthur of late reverted in thought or speech on the slightest provocation. This future was something otherwise than the past, something as strange as a journey into fairyland.

"Dolores," said McArthur, sitting close and speaking softly, "what's the use of waiting? Let's hustle the thing up."

Dolores, smiling in the darkness that had come into the room—it was early evening—nodded her head.

"I'm willing, Bal," she answered. "But . . . I've been wanting to tell you something first. I don't want to marry you without telling you this something."

The McArthur, as men do with whom the Fates make sport, laughed amiably.

"Very well," said he, "out with your little something and then away to the clergyman's."

For reply Dolores coiled an appealing arm about his neck and drew his head toward her.

"Oh, you're going to be so surprised," she murmured. "But I'm afraid. . . ."

"Come, come," said The Ballard and egged her on with a kiss.

"Well," Dolores began and into her voice crept a curiously solemn note, "I really don't have to tell you, but I'm going to. It wouldn't be fair. I've always been a good girl . . . since."

"Since!" echoed the McArthur.

"Yes, since," said Dolores. She was looking at him intently. "You've spoken so often of my . . . goodness and everything, I think it's only fair. . . ."

And despite the amazing seriousness of the situation, Dolores exploded in a strange little laugh.

"Oh, Bal," she gurgled, "you're so funny."

McArthur, whose heart had been indulging in miserable pyrotechnics during this prelude, seized upon her little laugh and cuddled it, spread it over his thought, listened to it with his soul long after it had ended. For the McArthur was trembling. A man cannot have lived for years privy to the ultimate nothingness of things without retaining some shred of shrewdness even under such conditions as these.

"It was when I was a little girl about sixteen going on seventeen," Dolores went on, her voice still mysteriously elate. "I was a waitress in my dad's hotel in Goshen. I was so young, Bal, and so tired of living in a little town, and I'd never seen anybody real before."

"For God's sake!" the McArthur blurted forth. "What are you talking about? Tell me, quick."

His trembling had assumed the proportions of an ague.

Dolores, with a quaint little note of mockery in her voice, a note that utterly escaped the feverish attention of McArthur, went on.

"Don't get the figits so, Bal. You make me feel like something in a melodrama. Now listen quietly and don't interrupt, please, dearest. There was a man came to Goshen. He was an actor and he stopped at Dad's little hotel. He played the piano in the little vaudeville theater on Main Street. And I waited on him at meal time and we talked. And then one evening, oh, Bal! don't, please. Listen to it all and don't be so excited."

"Go on," groaned the McArthur. He was sitting stiff and upright in his chair.

"That's better, dearest," Dolores continued. "And then one evening we went walking. He was such a wonderful man. I fell in love with him. It was the first time I'd been in love. And he said he loved me. I believed him, just as I believed you this time. But I was a kid then and—well . . ."

Dolores regarded the silent, immobile figure of her sweetheart, noted the pallor of his face which shone in the dark, and then, with another strange little laugh, leaned toward him and whispered:

"Don't you remember?"

The question went unanswered. No word came from Ballard McArthur, no sound.

"Don't you remember, Bal, the little waitress in Goshen, Indiana, nine years ago, that you made love to and . . . left the next day without a word. Oh, Bal, think!"

Ballad McArthur turned his eyes toward the young woman and opened his mouth.

"Remember?" he echoed.

"Yes, darling, it was you. Oh, it was you. That's . . . that's why I told you. I recognized you the first night I came to the Café. I hadn't seen you since or heard from you. But I knew you."

"Me!" cried McArthur. "You're insane!"

Dolores bit her lip. Tears came out of her eyes. In a voice somewhat broken she rushed on:

"Bal, you haven't forgotten? Tell

me you haven't. Don't you remember? You sat at the table under the window with the vines around it. And you always ordered grapefruit in the morning."

An inarticulate noise issued from the throat of McArthur. Receiving no reply, Dolores rushed on:

"Yes, and you were at the Goshen Opera House and played the piano there with another man who sang and played the banjo. A short little man, Bal. And you told me you loved me. And I . . . I believed you. . . ."

A silence fell upon the two. The McArthur's deep breathing was the only sound in the room. From the distance came the derisive cry of an auto horn. At length McArthur spoke.

"It wasn't me," he said. "It wasn't me. It was somebody else."

"Fod God's sake," Dolores cried, seizing his arm, "don't! . . . Bal, you're breaking my heart!"

"It was somebody else," groaned Ballard McArthur. "I don't remember . . ."

"Bal . . . Bal . . . Stop and think. We walked along the road . . . Oh, Bal . . . You said . . . you said . . ."

"It wasn't me," groaned the McArthur again.

"And you sang 'Coon, Coon, Coon, I Wish My Color Would Fade.' And the little short man played the banjo. I mean he sang it and you played it on the piano. 'Coon, Coon, Coon . . .'"

Ballad McArthur's hand went slowly to his eyes. His lips compressed and he drew a long breath.

"Now you remember," went on Dolores. "In Goshen, the little waitress. You called me Forgetmenot . . . Little Forgetmenot . . . Now you remember, don't you? . . ."

"I remember," spake the McArthur slowly, "of doing a vaudeville turn, yes, but I don't remember playing in Goshen. Wait a minute."

"The Ivy Hotel," blurted Dolores.

"The Ivy Hotel," repeated McArthur softly.

"Oh, how can you forget?" Dolores went on, her voice become tearful. "I

never forgot. I waited to hear from you . . . so long . . . I was true to you . . . so long. Until I met you I never looked at another man. I came to Chicago and took music lessons after Dad died. And when I saw you at the piano that first night . . . I knew that God . . . that God had guided me . . ."

"Goshen," whispered McArthur, "I . . . I . . . recall now. Oh!"

With an abrupt movement he jumped to his feet.

"And you forgot!" murmured Dolores. "You forgot all about it! You forgot the little waitress!"

Into McArthur's brain a memory vague and distant as some dim shape upon far waters crept. It drew closer, struggling out of the mists of time, struggling as if for life. It swept past the McArthur's inner eye, a vague, confused thing, out of focus, out of line.

Upon it crowded other memories, memories of girls with yellow hair, other than the hair of Dolores, memories of towns never before remembered, memories of walks through village streets. Which one, which one? A dizziness assailed McArthur. Faces, strange, dim faces, floated back and forth within his thought. Names, garbled and jumbled, leaped into his brain. Ah, now he remembered. But no, that was in Ohio somewhere, after he had split with Chesty Collins. He remembered Chesty. Chesty played the banjo and sang. They had toured the Middle West on a small vaudeville circuit, he, Ballard, at the piano. Goshen! Good God! What had happened in Goshen nine years ago?

And then slowly in McArthur's thoughts drifted a clear image, a clear recollection. The faces vying for recognition retreated before it. Like wraiths they had come out of the tomb of the McArthur's heart to haunt him. Now only one of them remained, the girlish, dark-eyed face of a little waitress . . . nine years ago . . . the Ivy Hotel . . . Yes!

"I remember," whispered the McArthur slowly. "But . . . I didn't think

it was you. I . . . I thought you . . . you were different."

"Different!" cried Dolores. "What do you mean, dear?"

"I thought . . ." But Ballard McArthur could not articulate the strange and intricate thought which struggled within him, which darkened something within him. Dolores, at his side on the parlor couch, was weeping. Her soft little sobs were punctuated with the phrase, "And you forgot!"

McArthur's hand caressed the hair of her lowered head.

"I didn't, I didn't," he repeated over and over. "Only I wasn't thinking of you as being someone who . . ."

The word stuck deep in his throat and fell back into his heart like some barbed thing.

"Sinned!"

It echoed monotonously in his mind. Bending forward, he kissed Dolores on the lips. It was still early. But an unrest had come into McArthur. He sighed.

"I want to think," he said softly. "I'll call you up in the morning."

Dolores, propelled by a bewildering intuition, leaped to her feet. Her arms circled her distracted lover.

"Oh, Bal," she cried against his coat. "Don't go . . . like this!"

IV

THE following week in the life of Ballard McArthur was a period during which it was given to the accomplished pianist of Runson's Café to perceive the futility of thought, to understand the strange mercurial quality of meditation. For three days he absented himself from the presence of Dolores. He walked the streets by sunlight and by moonlight. Like some strong swimmer battling in a horizonless sea was the McArthur in the tumbling and chaotic mass of the thoughts, the queries, the conclusions which assailed him from moment to moment. For these three days he sought truthfully and sincerely to straighten out the curious snarl in which the situation presented itself.

After all, he had been the man. There was a slight chance that Dolores was mistaken. His own memory of the affair was so vague, so tenuous. But no, he had been the man. He remembered. But this Ballad McArthur of nine years ago! He remembered him, too, a worthless fellow, a low, fanciful debauchee. And it was to such a one that Dolores had given herself! And he had believed her, by the nine Gods he had believed her . . . otherwise. That was why he had fallen in love with her. Hell and damnation! . . . all women were alike . . .

It was this last conclusion which took the deepest root. Let us be varied in our metaphors. It was this conclusion which was the rock upon which the submerged McArthur climbed out of his sea. Hell and damnation . . . all women were alike! To bed with McArthur went this sinister thought. Into the street it followed him. A dark, sullen grimace came into his face. It was a grimace which Padraic Rafferty, the bartender, recognized and hailed with delight when The Ballad hove into view in the second week of his vacation. It was the old McArthur come to his senses, and Padraic Rafferty, who was a man of perceptions, knew and in his own way understood.

"What'll it be?" said he.

"Bourbon," said the McArthur. "Have one, Pat."

And they drank as men drink when they plight a troth. And having drank the McArthur wiped his lips and smiled, a lean, sallow smile. His eyes gleamed into the eyes of his friend.

"Ho," he grinned, "you know what I've always told you? Well, it's true. ue as the Gospel ain't. Women are

born deceivers. And what's more, there ain't a mother's daughter among them that is any better than the rest."

The McArthur gazed defiantly into the eyes of the Rafferty. "S'true," he said and waited for some insane contradiction.

"I've always agreed with you, Mac," answered Padraic Rafferty, "and I always will on that point."

"That being settled," smiled McArthur, "where's the boss. I think I'll get back into harness. Tonight."

And thus it came about that Ballad McArthur at 5.30 walked through the smear of tables, drinkers, waiters, that crowded the flamboyant interior of Runson's Café and seated himself at the piano with a curt nod at the clarinet and the violin. He had determined. There was in his heart a strange ache, the ache of something not quite dead. But at this he smiled. Soon it would drag its tired self into the mausoleum wherein many such other things lay in peace.

"Dolores." He repeated the name as he fumbled with the leaves of a new march. She wouldn't come back. The McArthur's brain had long ago closed itself to the finer points of the situation, to certain elastic and almost insufferable thoughts which had kept him awake for six nights. There remained only the thought, "I believed in her. I thought she was good. . . . And . . . she was like the rest. . . ."

And so, with the curious smile of a man privy to the ultimate nothingness of things, Ballad McArthur banged forth in precise and infallible tempo a thing of sharps and flats and wailing harmonies whose very title was unknown to him.



WHEN a woman isn't talking about her friends she is usually giving them something to talk about.

LADIES AT TWELVE

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By George O'Neil

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

ELSA, an attractive young married woman

RICHARD, her husband

ALFRED, an attractive young man

[The curtain rises on almost complete darkness. The only light slants in from a leaded window at the right and reveals a divan and some indistinguishable objects of furniture. There is no sound until a clock lightly and slowly chimes twelve. After a minute or so, a long crack of light shows at the left, widens gradually, and someone comes in. Another moment of silence, and then a voice speaks in a whisper.

THE VOICE

Alfred!

[There is no answer.]

Alfred?

[A noise of movement is heard at the right, and a man speaks.]

ALFRED

Yes—yes, I'm here . . .

THE VOICE

(This time revealing itself as feminine.) It's twelve; and Richard's light is out.

ALFRED

(A trifle drowsily.) We're all right then, aren't we?

THE VOICE

(Suspiciously.) Were you sleeping?

ALFRED

Oh, no—anxiously waiting for you, Elsa!

ELSA

(Petulantly). Well, here I am, standing alone in the darkness!

ALFRED

Yes, dear—I'm trying to find you.

(Stumbles.) Damn! . . . Ah, here you are! Kiss me.

[A pause.]

ELSA

That isn't the way you kissed me last night.

ALFRED

You were five minutes late last night, my dear.

ELSA

Don't you think we might risk a little light? This is so unsatisfactory—not knowing where to find your hand in the darkness.

ALFRED

Come sit here where the light from the window falls. Moonlight is better for love than lamps.

[They move to the divan, and sit where the light finds them.]

ELSA

What a frightful thing it is that we must go sneaking about, hiding our love in darkness!

ALFRED

The willingness to do mean things for love is one of the joys of loving.

ELSA

I don't agree with you, Alfred. Why should we go on in this way?

ALFRED

Why—? Aren't there many reasons?

ELSA

I love you . . . and you love me.

ALFRED

Most surely; but—

ELSA

But what?

ALFRED

Well, remember, you *have* a husband.

ELSA

My husband—an entirely selfish one. And there are no hindering ties—no children. Why should I consider him?

ALFRED

I should think one would consider one's husband—from a sort of habit, you know.

ELSA

Well, no habits are good; and love breaks them all . . . you think it is right, don't you, Alfred?

ALFRED

My dearest, moonlight should never hear love moralize—only manifest. It should hear me telling you all those things that love-loosed tongues will say.

ELSA

Yes, Alfred, you're always saying them! I love you too much to be satisfied with this froth of infatuation. When I go digging about the roots of our affection you tell me to look at the flowers!

ALFRED

My beloved lady, be careful in cutting the earth about that tender plant. Think—its tendrils are delicate, and some of them cling. . . .

ELSA

(*Irritated.*) Oh, Alfred!

ALFRED

Come, be sweet! Let's not spend this hour in useless discussion.

ELSA

Useless discussion! Do you really think it useless—trying to find a way to happiness for us?

ALFRED

Dear, aren't we happy?

ELSA

You amaze me! Happy—! When each minute we are afraid of being discovered—discovered in the ignominy of love?

ALFRED

One can be very happy and uncomfortable at the same time; and one cannot expect to be in love—and comfortable.

ELSA

There you are—evading again with a twisted speech!

ALFRED

But why this sudden restlessness?

ELSA

I've told you—I can't bear this sitting in darkness and feeling as though we were a pair of criminals!

ALFRED

But what would you do—give up our few opportunities for being together alone?

ELSA

No—arrange matters so that we may be together always.

ALFRED

Oh, but my dear—!

ELSA

What is it? That doesn't appeal to you?

ALFRED

Why—yes, of course! But could it—how can it be arranged?

ELSA

Quite easily, really; simply go to my husband and tell him everything. A divorce would be no trouble at all.

ALFRED

A divorce! You don't mean it, really—?

ELSA

Why shouldn't I mean it? Is there any reason? The responsibility—support—?

ALFRED

Oh, no! Yes—yes, of course! But it would be—well, messy, you know.

ELSA

What were you saying a moment ago—about love and comfort?

ALFRED

Well, my dear, I want *you* to be as comfortable as *possible*

ELSA

(*Accusingly.*) Alfred, I am beginning to think terrible things!

ALFRED

Beginning—?

ELSA

Oh, you're afraid! You haven't the courage to face the talk we'd cause—or Richard;—is *that* it? You're afraid of Richard?

ALFRED

Nonsense! I'm thinking of you. It's a matter that must be considered carefully. Aside from the question of the future, are you quite sure you're free—conscientiously, to take such a step?

ELSA

Why not? I shouldn't harm Richard by permitting him to divorce me; and it wouldn't hurt him—much—except for his vanity. I don't believe he loves me—I'm not sure—at least, not madly . . .

ALFRED

I know; but he *has* always been very

kind to you—and given you all you've wanted.

ELSA

(*Somewhat loudly.*) Alfred! The idea of your trying to persuade me against freeing myself—for you!

ALFRED

Not persuading you, dear; cautioning you.

ELSA

(*Moving away from him.*) That is too much! I am beginning to see how profound your love for me is.

ALFRED

(*A change in his tone.*) Oh, are you?

ELSA

(*In amazement.*) Alfred!

ALFRED

(*Coolly.*) Well?

ELSA

Is it, or isn't it?

ALFRED

Is it what?

ELSA

Profound?

ALFRED

That sounds rather silly, don't you think?

ELSA

(*Her voice rising.*) Silly—silly, Alfred!

ALFRED

Please, not so loud. You'll have the entire house down on us in a minute.

ELSA

(*Tearfully.*) Oh . . .
[Suddenly the light is flashed on, and the two jump to their feet. ELSA utters a short scream; ALFRED upsets a tall vase of flowers in rising. Across the room a man stands leaning against the mantel. He is in a dressing gown; and his hair, slightly gray, is rumpled. Calmly he surveys

the pair, who stand looking quite absurd as they stare agape.]

ELSA

(Her voice not wholly recovered.)

Richard!

RICHARD

Forgive my suddenness. I thought I'd better take a hand in your pleasant affair before you bungled it irretrievably. Really, your words seemed to be carrying you to no delicate conclusion, and you were making a sacrifice of dignity.

ELSA

You heard . . . us?

RICHARD

I did.

ELSA

You sneaked in and listened?

RICHARD

I did not. I was sleeping on the divan, and your voices roused me; then I listened.

ELSA

Oh, you did?

RICHARD

Are you surprised that I should eavesdrop when I find my wife meeting my houseguest at midnight in the dark?

ELSA

I should think you would have shown yourself at once.

RICHARD

I daresay it might have been more conventional—dramatically; but perhaps it was a certain curiosity that overcame my chivalry. It is delightful of you to introduce morals, my dear; but rather than crawl on hands and knees from the room—to save you embarrassment—I stayed, and heard. *[ELSA glances furtively at ALFRED.]*

You are wondering *what*? It seemed to me you were—well, rather throwing yourself at the young man's head. The

young man was smothering your practical words in charmingly flowery phrases; and you were losing grace and ground. I thought I might be able to help—someone.

[ELSA and ALFRED continue to stand with little command of ease; her attitude almost succeeds as a certain amount of defiance.]

We might all be seated while I offer my ideas of the tentative subject. You will grant, surely, that I am entitled to a few. I shall be brief.

ELSA

(Moving to leave.) This is an absurd situation.

RICHARD

I agree; but since you're responsible for it, you might stay to play your part. *[ELSA turns with an expression of petulant anger and leans against a table. ALFRED remains awkwardly standing by the divan, while RICHARD seats himself and becomes ostentatiously comfortable in a large chair, at the left.]*

ELSA

Please say what you have to say, and don't sit there creating dramatic effects.

RICHARD

My dear, you know you're reveling in the suspense of this. Women spend their lives leading up to climaxes.

ELSA

Please—I've heard all the epigrams about women.

RICHARD

Impossible;—they're always giving us fresh material.

ALFRED

I object to standing here like a butler in a drawing-room comedy.

RICHARD

Have patience. You'll get your lines in a moment. *(He pauses to light a cigarette.)* Now, what are we going to

do about it? Obeying the usual order of things, I believe I should fly into uncontrolled rage; fling furniture about; order both of you from my house, or at least shoot one—either, I suppose. But, of course, we know that's ridiculously inartistic. Like a careful dramatist, I shall consider the material I have, and arrange the consistent dénouement. Here is Elsa, my lovely young wife: she lives in a luxurious house, has all its toys—motors, servants and the rest. I am not abusive; examining my conscience with meticulousness, I decide that I am a fairly considerate husband,—kind, I add to the category of my virtues. I—ahem—love my wife. (ELSA examines a paper-weight scrupulously.) She does not return the affection. Good grounds for divorce? Excellent! Here is a young man—my friend. Visiting me, he takes a fancy to my wife—she to him; he is handsome and engaging. It is all quite natural, for that Nemesis, middle age, has brought his first vindictiveness to the husband:—a desire to be in bed before twelve. My wife's fancy for the young man flowers to love. He—but never mind, perhaps he will do for a surprise; they are the life of drama. I hear my wife tell the young man that she is willing to marry him. (ELSA tosses her head with great impatience.) Is the young man consistently elated? (He looks at ALFRED, who stands gazing imperturbably at nothing.) (Continuing.) Is he consistently elated? (A pause.) I cannot make my characters speak. The situation is forced.

ELSA

This is undignified, and you are displaying a decided want of taste. (She starts to the door.)

RICHARD

(In a changed tone.) Just a minute. I'll tell you what I propose to do. I hope I shall please everyone. Elsa, I am going to ask Alfred to take you. (ELSA turns in surprise; and ALFRED looks first at her and then at RICHARD.) You may get a divorce on whatever

grounds you choose. My gallantry will be nicely established in that way. [ELSA is obviously at a loss for words.]

ALFRED

You are very brutal to your wife. I am sorry to place her in this degrading position.

RICHARD

(Smiles.) Careful handling can give it a graceful climax, in spite of my clumsiness.

ALFRED

To spare Elsa further humiliation, I shall do my part to end this. You know, of course, that I have no intention of marrying her, or any wish to be involved in extreme difficulties arising between you.

[ELSA stops a gasp of amazement.]

RICHARD

One could call you neither altruistic nor delicately chivalrous; but you are direct.

ELSA

(Coming forward, her eyes flashing.) Stop! You are neither of you skillful with words.

RICHARD

With motives—would be better, I think.

ELSA

I will not stand here while you blunder with my pride! (To ALFRED.) Please go.

ALFRED

(Steps toward ELSA.) Elsa, it's quite awful. I am sorry. (She turns away from him. After a moment of hesitancy he goes to the door, where he looks back and smiles slightly.) I once knew a man who wouldn't intoxicate himself because he loved wine, so he'd only sip it, for the flavour; I shall never marry—I am not a womanhater. [He goes out and closes the door. ELSA walks slowly to the mantel and stands, gazing into its empty fireplace.

RICHARD *desultorily paces the room, his hands clasped behind him. There is a long, almost palpable silence, which RICHARD at last interrupts.*]

RICHARD
Your Prince Charming is gone.

ELSA
(*Turning to look at him coldly.*)
Will you please leave me? Aren't you satisfied?

RICHARD
Satisfied? My dear—!

ELSA
Won't you go?

RICHARD
Aren't you going to bed? It's much after twelve.
[ELSA *sits before the fireplace, her back to RICHARD. There is another silence.*]

RICHARD
My dear, if ever again—anything should happen—avoid twelve. . . . There's something provocative about twelve. . . . And the lights, dear. . . . If it hadn't been for the dark—

ELSA
(*Rising and frowning.*) What are you going to do about it?

RICHARD
About—?

ELSA
Don't be absurd! About me, of course.

RICHARD
Well, I might cast you out, mightn't I? Or strike you—that would be so nice—unusual.

ELSA
(*Her patience gone.*) Please!

RICHARD
I'll tell you—

ELSA
(*Turning.*) Well?

RICHARD
I shall treat you in the beautiful Christian way.

ELSA
Meaning—?

RICHARD
I shall turn the other cheek. Give you another chance to hurt me, my dear; which you will do—often. You will remember how I forgave you the last time—and how much I loved you in forgiving; and you will go on giving me adventures in the higher moralities.

ELSA
That's an exalted vanity, isn't it?

RICHARD
Perhaps you're right. It's amusing of you to find an obscure explanation; I suppose there is one, always.

ELSA
Yes—I think so.

RICHARD
I wonder—if there's one for you. . . .

ELSA
(*Coming slowly out into the room.*)
Could you—find it?

RICHARD
Twelve o'clock—

ELSA
Yes?

RICHARD
Ghost time.

ELSA
(*With a slight smile.*) And my ghost—?

RICHARD
Ah, in spring—romance!—an undiscriminating ghost.

ELSA
There is an ache gets into the heart—light hearts, I suppose.

RICHARD
No—heavy

ELSA

(*With careful directness.*) Richard, our marriage has become . . . a trifle—uneventful.

RICHARD

Most lives are, Elsa. (*Sighs.*) And what better excuse for an uneventful life than marriage?

ELSA

(*Beginning to arrange the upset vase of flowers.*) You are a cynic.

RICHARD

Yes, I believe you are right. Thank heavens, I *can* be! You see, a cynic is one who makes a game out of being disappointed,

[*ELSA spends more time than the arranging of the flowers justifies. She is standing in a winsomely fluttered consciousness of RICHARD'S direct gaze. Slowly, and unnoticed by them, the door opens, and ALFRED stands, hesitantly, at the threshold. He is dressed in a topcoat, and is carrying traveling bags.*]

ALFRED

I beg your pardon. I'd like to come in for a moment.

[*ELSA and RICHARD turn to him in startled surprise.*]

ALFRED

I shall manage to catch the late train to town; but before I go—

RICHARD

It isn't really necessary—in the morning it would be easier for you.

ALFRED

Thank you. I shall go at once. But Elsa . . . I am a cad, of course . . . may I talk to you . . . just for a moment?

RICHARD

If you *will* go, I'll call the man to drive you to the station.

ALFRED

No, please don't trouble—

[*RICHARD goes out.*]

ELSA

Is there anything to say, do you think?

ALFRED

There's this, Elsa: I am an orthodox cad, I know. I'm like a million others I know of;—the unimportant sort to whom nothing seems important.

ELSA

Yes?

ALFRED

And now I'm going to be a fool. I'm going to do something grotesque; but most young men are fools, Elsa.

ELSA

Wisdom does come from its seed slowly.

ALFRED

Yes—Elsa, if you—I—if you will come, Elsa—marriage. . . .

ELSA

(*Looks at him curiously.*) Marriage—?

ALFRED

However it can be arranged! If you are willing—with me, Elsa.

ELSA

(*Begins to laugh.*) Alfred, you were right about young men.

ALFRED

I know; I am glad you think I'm a fool.

ELSA

It's a *kinder* feeling—is that it?

ALFRED

More deserved, I think.

ELSA

Yes, Alfred; you are right. Ladies at twelve—delectable young men—
young men in danger! Good-bye, I am appeased.

ALFRED

What I said, Elsa—you still—

No. ELSA
she glances up its light chime strikes the half hour. She laughs softly.) Richard—
 Remember, then— RICHARD
(Coming slowly towards her.) Yes, Elsa?
ELSA
 Alfred, I shall make a game of disappointment. You have given me my first opportunity. There will be compensations for me. Good-bye.
ALFRED
 Good-bye, Elsa. I am sorry. *(He starts to go, and meets RICHARD in the doorway.)*
RICHARD
 The car will take you.
ALFRED
 Thank you. Good-bye.
[Goes out. RICHARD comes into the room and busies himself lighting the lamps and switching off the great center light.]
RICHARD
 Do you mind?
ELSA
 No; it's much pleasanter. *(She goes to look at the clock on the mantel; as*
RICHARD
Yes, Elsa . . .
[He bends to her and with a little quick movement she kisses him lightly as
[The Curtain Falls.]



INTEREST

By Patience Trask

SHE listened wearily as he told her of his struggles to attain success. His plans for the future failed to interest her.

When he said that one time he fell into the crevice of a glacier and almost froze before they rescued him, and that once he lay stricken with the plague in a deserted Chinese village, she yawned.

When he spoke of his mother and his small brother and his sister's baby and his mammonite uncle, she was bored.

* * *

A loosened curl, brushing against her cheek, annoyed him.

"There is a curl against your cheek," he said.

"Yes?" she breathed eagerly, pressing against him. . . .

SECOND QUALITY

By Oscar Graeve

I

HE disapproved of her intensely, he did not want to look at her and yet he could not pull his eyes away from her. It was uncomfortable; it was especially uncomfortable because Mr. Horace Bopp had other things to think about—more important things. He wanted to plan the letter which he had to write on the morrow offering a Georgette crêpe waist to the customers of his employers, the Bon Marché Bargain House.

While he was still very young, someone had made the fatal mistake of telling Horace Bopp he had unusual gifts as a writer. Ever since Horace had taken his work seriously. Worse than that, he had taken himself seriously. He felt that he was pre-ordained to Accomplish Something in the World; not for one minute must he let anything stand in the way of that accomplishment. And he was satisfied with his progress toward his ultimate goal even though his unusual gifts had brought him so far no nearer to it than a position as chief correspondent in the advertising department of the big mail-order house.

On the table beside him lay a small tablet. This tablet he always carried with him; upon it he jotted down ideas whenever the Goddess of Inspiration, fickle jade, chose to brush him with her wings. At this particular moment upon the tablet was written,

"My dear Mrs. Smith: Up and down Fifth Avenue these warm spring days you will see the smart women of the great metropolis doffing their jackets and revealing Georgette crêpe waists. It is just such a waist we offer you this week at the ridiculously low price of \$3.69."

S. S.—vii—6

Horace was not altogether content with the "doffing their jackets." That phrase would have to be changed. But otherwise it was a good beginning, a very good beginning—one destined, he knew, to win the approval of Mr. Jacobs, who sat in the chief of the seats of the mighty of the Bon Marché Bargain House.

But since this woman had entered the dining-room, entered languorously, a hand upon her hip, Horace could get no further with his letter. He could only gaze at her, utterly distracted, woefully disturbed.

The most unfortunate part of it was, this was not the first time it had happened. In the week she had lived here, every time she entered the dining-room Horace's well-ordered thoughts and plans had, so to speak, fallen to pieces.

Not that she paid any attention to him—not the slightest. Her sole offense was in sitting directly opposite him. Mrs. Phillips' *pension* was an "exclusive" and "refined" place in Madison Avenue. There was no vulgar communal table for all the guests. No, indeed! There were small individual tables; each boarder, if he wished, had a little table of his own or, if he preferred, he could sit with two or three congenial fellows. Mr. Bopp, however, always preferred to sit alone. He was a disciple of that school which insists upon improving every shining hour, and while he sat absently devouring his meals he kept his thought concentrated upon the letters which the Bon Marché Bargain House paid him a good salary to write for them. At least, he had always kept his thoughts concentrated upon them until this woman had bewitched him.

Horace could not understand why

she had this power over his recalcitrant attention. Her indifference to him was almost insulting. When her eyes did light on him they seemed bitter, amused, ironic. But they seldom chose to be even that, for she rarely so much as gave him the most fleeting of glances. For the greater part she sat there at the little table opposite his own staring at nothing at all, her great eyes, wide and tragic, a little like an animal's that helplessly watches its doom approaching. She was glaringly unhappy and she made no attempt to conceal it. Very poor taste, thought Mr. Bopp. And yet she was a lady.

It had taken Mr. Bopp a long, hard struggle of observation to acquire the manners of a gentleman—especially the table manners of a gentleman. Hence, he was quick to recognize good form in others. He saw that this woman ate as a lady should, although she sat there with her elbows on the table, carelessly posed, graceful, insouciant. She had attained that peak of good manners denied to Mr. Bopp, where she could act in any way she pleased and still give the impression of exquisite good form. It made Mr. Bopp squirm and sigh; it also made him hate her the more.

His own acquaintance with the world of good manners had been comparatively recent. At an early age he had been kicked out into a world where at best manners were a negligible factor; he had been shunted from one miserable boarding-house to another. Then someone had given him his faith in himself as a writer. But the struggle continued until, one day, it had been discovered, in a miraculous fashion, that he could write letters that sold goods to people, especially to women in small country towns. Followed his employment with the Bon Marché Bargain House, followed his rapid advancement to chief correspondent. With rare eloquence Mr. Bopp could paint the desirability of a navy blue serge suit at \$12.95; with delicious zest he could point out the advantages of a sandcolored gabardine walking skirt at \$4.37. Little did it matter that, in truth,

these garments were but poor shoddy, second-quality articles; under the magic of Mr. Bopp's pen they masqueraded beneath the glamorous cloak of Fifth Avenue's choicest adjectives.

Thus comforts had come to Horace Bopp; luxuries, too, had come. Mrs. Phillips' select *pension*, so different from the cheap boarding-houses of his early years, was a distinct luxury.

Horace Bopp had become a worshipper at the shrine of his own art. He had studied and sweated and prayed to improve his ability to write letters, to write letters that would bring in a greater percentage of orders from the women in small towns whom Mr. Bopp persuaded into the belief that life was not worth living without serge suits and gabardine skirts and waists of Georgette crêpe.

But, without knowing it, Mr. Bopp had paid for his devotion.

Like a worker toiling for precious metal deep within a mine, Mr. Bopp had been shut off from much of the air and the sunlight of the world. He had become rather a dried-up, pallid little man. Always within his pocket, together with the tablet upon which he jotted down ideas, he carried a box of cough drops. . . . Mr. Bopp was constantly troubled with a little dry cough.

But such as he was, he was satisfied. And such as was the circumspect world he had made for himself he was content in it. Until—until this unhappy woman had swept down upon him and had seemed to visit upon him some of her own troubled, stormy spirit.

So he sat there, that April night, hating her, admiring her, torn by her very proximity into a complexity of emotions such as his thin little chest had never experienced before—and yet he had never had a single word with her.

But that same night, Fate or the gods or whoever arranges such things, saw that he did actually become acquainted with her.

II

I CANNOT overemphasize the "refinement" of the *pension* in which Mr.

Bopp was pleased, well pleased, to live. After dinner in the quiet and refined dining-room, each guest stole softly upstairs to his or her room and unless some concert or lecture were planned for the evening, stayed there in refined seclusion. This plan suited Mr. Bopp's requirements exceptionally well. He was taking a Person Efficiency Course which required his attendance three nights a week. Of the four remaining nights two he devoted to work on his letters; one night—usually Saturday—was given to Recreation (Personal Efficiency absolutely demanded Recreation, so Mr. Bopp journeyed forth to a moving-picture palace which bored him into a sullen bitterness until he fell again to thinking of his beloved letters), and on the one remaining night left he went to Brooklyn to visit his only living relatives, an aged aunt and uncle, who admired him tremendously as a steady and ambitious young man who was bound to make his mark in the world.

On this particular day, April had lived up to her reputation. It had been mild and sunny till evening but at nightfall the capricious maid turned around and wept so lustily that the streets ran with her tears. But Horace was one of those men who are always fully prepared for rain. In his clothes-closet he had rubbers, a raincoat, an umbrella and an old hat; in his locker at the office he had extra rubbers and an extra umbrella. No sudden shower ever vented its spleen upon Horace.

Fully equipped against the weather, he descended the stairs of the *pension*, for this was one of the nights when Personal Efficiency demanded his presence. And there, in the doorway of the house, stood the woman who had so strangely disturbed him. Bareheaded she was, and the rain blew in gusts upon her. She stood with a letter in her hand, obviously ready to brave the elements despite her hatless and coatless condition.

A rare courage seized Horace. He touched her arm timidly and she swung around with such vehemence that she almost bowled him over. But he had

enough breath left (and just enough courage) to gasp:

"May I mail the letter for you?"

Her great sorrowful eyes swept him bitterly as if she were taking in and mocking the sedate little figure he made in his grey-cloth raincoat and the old faded hat which he had neglected to remove. But when she spoke her voice was unexpectedly gentle—gentle and rich with a peculiarly husky, bruised tone. Unexpected, too, was the question she in turn asked him:

"Where are you going?"

"To a lecture."

"Where?"

"Down at the University in Washington Square."

She hesitated a moment, then plunged on a little desperately.

"Will you do more than mail the letter? Will you deliver it for me? It's on your way."

Horace nodded assent with the curious feeling that he would have sped across the continent if she had asked it.

"Thanks," she said simply, pressing the letter into his hand and with the undulating walk of which he disapproved she swept away, up the stairs and out of his sight, while he continued to stand for a minute or two gazing after her, a little dazed, a little frightened and altogether exhilarated and transported—he found he no longer hated her.

Her voice, her gentle, husky voice, had completed his conquest, had laid him waste, disarmed and thrown him wide to pillage. Henceforth he was hers to do with as she would, to fill with overbrimming rapture or to fling away, useless, as one flings an empty, broken bottle. . . . And the fact that she knew nothing of this does not alter the circumstances one whit.

III

CONSULTATION of the address on the envelope brought Mr. Bopp to the south side of Washington Square and to a dilapidated brownstone building. Further consultation told him to ask for Mr. Graham Esham—but there was no

need to ask; in the hallway of the brown building he found a card bearing Mr. Esham's name together with the legend, "Top Floor Front."

It was Mr. Esham himself who opened the door and after the squalor and bareness of the hallway, with its walls from which the paint was peeling, the splendor of the room into which Horace Bopp gazed quite stunned him. It glowed with color—with the shining, gleaming colors of tapestries and bronzes and paintings. There was a fireplace in which sparkled a small wood fire and before the fireplace was a luxurious couch covered with pillows of yellow and black silk. Mr. Esham himself was rather overwhelming. He was a large man with Viking blue eyes and an arrogant nose. His chest was like a great drum and a blonde Van Dyke further added to his heroic appearance.

He invited Mr. Bopp in, closed the door and seating himself on the luxurious couch, luxuriously lighted a cigarette before opening the letter. When he did open it, he opened it carelessly, glancing through it with an indifferent smile hovering over his full lips. Then with particular precision, so Mr. Bopp thought, he tore the letter into minute bits and tossed them over the fire as one shakes sugar over oatmeal.

"There is no answer," he said shortly to Mr. Bopp.

"No, I did not think there was an answer," said Mr. Bopp.

"Just what do you mean by that?" asked Mr. Esham, and his Viking eyes hardened a trifle.

"I mean I was told to deliver the letter—that is all," Mr. Bopp hastened to explain.

Mr. Esham arose and bowed Mr. Bopp out of the glowing room with unnecessary politeness, but at the door he arrested him with:

"May I ask for how long you have been Sylvia Hudson's messenger?"

Something in Mr. Bopp flared up within him and drove him to answer fervently:

"As long as she has wanted me to be."

And with that he groped his way down the dim stairs and out again into the rain-swept street.

It was but a step or two from there to the Personal Efficiency Course—but very little of Personal Efficiency did Horace Bopp learn that evening.

In fact, it may be said that evening marked the beginning of a very chaotic period of life for Mr. Bopp.

No longer were the letters the Bon Marché Bargain House sent out to small towns faultless forms of art in their own peculiar way. The truth was, Mr. Bopp did not put his heart and soul in them as he had formerly done. No longer were second-quality Georgette crêpe waists and sand-colored Gabardine skirts the ruling passion of his life. His heart and soul were off on a strange adventure of their own, traveling palpitating paths which they had never known before. And his heart and soul, in their mad journey, carried his thoughts after them. He could think of nothing else but Sylvia Hudson and her unhappiness—and always lurking in the background was the heroic figure of Mr. Esham, with his cold Viking eyes and his thick red lips, their twitching smile hidden only partly beneath a golden Van Dyke.

Horace sensed vaguely why Miss Hudson was unhappy. He was no great psychologist, but the insight that comes to all of us when we are vitally interested told him that no woman who loved Mr. Graham Esham would be happy for long. And that Miss Hudson loved Mr. Esham there was to Mr. Bopp not the shadow of a doubt. Grotesquely miserable though it made him, he knew it was so and that there was no sense in trying to comfort himself by pretending it was not so.

The very next night, if it were needed, his impression would have been confirmed. Miss Hudson knocked on his door to inquire whether he had delivered her letter. She did not enter the room, but stood in the hallway, her haunting eyes fixed upon Mr. Bopp.

"You delivered it to Mr. Esham himself?" she asked.

Horace nodded.

Although she stood in darkness he imagined he saw the color flood her face before she could bring herself to the next question:

"There—there was no one else with Mr. Esham?"

Mr. Bopp's head shook a negative.

Still she waited, and in order to relieve the tension Mr. Bopp volunteered the information that Mr. Esham had read the letter while he, Mr. Bopp, waited. But kindness made him withhold an account of how Mr. Esham had torn her letter carelessly into fine bits and scattered them over the fire.

Nevertheless, even without this information, Sylvia Hudson seemed disturbed. She passed a long white hand over her forehead.

"Men are beasts!" she said presently, and moved away from Mr. Bopp's doorway.

Mr. Bopp's agitation began to betray itself in more ways than one. Not only his letters suffered. He also found he was no longer content to stay in his room at night, devoting himself to the study of Improving Literature. He even found that the Personal Efficiency Course which he had worshipped abjectly ceased to satisfy him. He cut the lectures shamelessly and, for want of anything better to do, took to wandering the streets. Far and wide he wandered, up through the garish theater districts, down along the wide, wind-swept expanse of the river-front; through the howling, crowded thoroughfares of the East Side, where he stumbled along over children and pushcarts in an aimless, blundering way.

IV

It was up in the theater district one night that he saw Mr. Esham and Miss Hudson. They passed so close to him that he could have put out his hand and touched hers. But he did nothing of the kind. Instead, he shrank back and tried to make himself seem even more

insignificant than he was. For that matter, never had he felt so insignificant. As he saw them, this heroic couple, come sailing down upon him a great understanding, a miserable understanding, flooded Mr. Bopp. For he realized what a glorious, splendid being Mr. Graham Esham was—it was as if he saw him with the eyes of the woman who hung on his arm. And curiously enough it was as if he could see himself, Horace Bopp, in contrast to this blue-eyed Viking.

Mr. Esham was the real thing, a man, and Horace was simply a poor imitation of a man. Second-quality, that's what he was. Just like the goods he sold. Just as they were but poor imitations of what they were supposed to be, so he, Horace, was a poor imitation of what he was supposed to be. No wonder she loved Esham. And tonight her love for the man blazed forth like a flame. She was happy now, she was transfigured. She looked up into Graham Esham's eyes with a look that Mr. Bopp had never seen for himself on a woman's face—a look that he could never hope to see. She was laughing and Mr. Esham, too, was laughing, his great blonde head thrown back, his Van Dyke stuck out so that it was a horizontal golden tuft. So they passed him, leaving him an obscure shadow in the crowd that thronged Broadway.

But evidently Sylvia Hudson's happiness was shortlived. A night or two later at dinner he found her sitting opposite him again, her somber, tragic eyes fixed hopelessly upon space. By this time, in fact, ever since Mr. Bopp had acted as her messenger, they had fallen into a nodding acquaintance.

"Good evening, Miss Hudson," Mr. Bopp would say as he passed her table, and "Good evening," she would respond in that deep, husky voice that so stirred him.

A wild and outrageous idea came to Mr. Bopp one night. She had been happy going to the theater. He had seen that. He knew, he knew very well, that she had been happy because she had been with the Viking; but,

nevertheless, he reasoned, perhaps she could be just a tiny little bit happy if she went to the theater with him, Mr. Bopp. At least, it would give her eyes something else to rest upon than a tragic nothing at all.

He gulped down his apple-pie and coffee and walked up to her table. His hands were icy, his knees were water, but he managed to say:

"I saw you the other night on Broadway with Mr. Esham."

"Yes," she said—nothing more.

"You were going to the theater?"

"Yes," she said again. "It was a farewell party Mr. Esham and I had. He has gone away for the rest of the summer."

This remark was stimulating.

"I wonder if you will do me the honor to go with me to the theater some night?" asked Mr. Bopp.

"Why—yes," she answered, with a noticeable pause between the two words.

"Tonight!" exclaimed Mr. Bopp.

Her eyes, her bitter, ironic eyes, came slowly to meet his pleading ones.

"Why do you bother with me?" she asked. "I realize I'm not very cheerful company."

"It would give me the greatest pleasure if you'd accept, Miss Hudson."

"Oh,"—I'm afraid!—Then she bit her lips and shrugged her shoulders. "Very well—if it will give you pleasure."

"What would you like to see?"

"Anything you suggest."

It put him in a terrific quandary, but he rose to it valiantly. Someone had told him "Just for Tonight" was the smartest musical comedy in town and he suggested that. She nodded an indifferent assent.

It was an entrancing evening for Mr. Bopp. He gasped when she descended the stairs to meet him at eight o'clock. She had bound her dark hair with a band of glittering green and beneath the long black cloak she wore he saw that she had on an evening gown, too, of glittering green.

"I—I didn't know you were going to

get all dressed up," he said plaintively, and then instead of giving utterance to the lie which rose to his lips, he confessed, "I haven't any evening clothes myself—I've never had any."

For the first time she gave him the full, intoxicating warmth of her smile. "Why, that doesn't matter. Evening clothes, after all, are nothing but stupid convention."

During all that evening at the theater they did not exchange a half-dozen words. Mr. Bopp wondered if she even saw the beautiful girls that pranced upon the stage, even heard the tinkling music that set his own feet to tapping. Silent, apart, wrapped in her cloak of unhappiness, she sat beside him. And yet Mr. Bopp was perfectly content to have it so; it was as if her very nearness satisfied him; that first night he spent alone with her was the crowning achievement of his life.

He thought somewhat of proposing a restaurant after the theater. He had heard that to do the thing up brown one should go to a restaurant after the theater. And it is only telling the whole truth to say he was a little alarmed at the thought of the expense, but his attitude is more clearly explained by the remark he made to himself:

"Hang the cost! I wouldn't care if it cost my last cent so long as I could have her with me a few minutes more."

It was rank fear, that was all, that finally decided him not to speak of the restaurant. He could not bear to think of her refusal. The evening had been too perfect to take any chances.

That was only the beginning of a number of evenings they spent together, she always silent, distant, Mr. Bopp always fervently happy, proud to be with her, intoxicated with her companionship.

Once she said to him again, as she had that first night:

"Why do you bother with me? I'm beastly company for you—and I realize it. But I can't help it!"—and then she said something that filled Mr. Bopp with rapture for many a day.

"My dear friend," she said, "most

men ask so much and you ask so little. How I love you for it!"

"It's a great honor you do me," answered Mr. Bopp, his voice a little choked and queer. "I realize I'm not much of a man to go around with you. I'm not like—Him."

She gazed at Horace sorrowfully.

"No, you're not like—the man I love!" she said. "Thank God, it has been given to me to know all men are not like him."

V

So Summer dragged her dusty skirts over the city, over baked asphalt pavements and through smothered nights. The theaters, one by one, closed their doors and put up great, staring posters announcing the fall attractions. But Mr. Bopp and his grand lady still went out on their little excursions—sometimes they took a hansom and drove slowly through the park, sometimes, when it was cooler, they simply strolled up the deserted Avenue, stopping for an ice-cream soda in a drug-shop, and one expensive but never-to-be-forgotten evening they took a taxicab up to Claremont and dined there together overlooking the river where each boat that passed was like a gem-laden barge headed for fairyland.

A close observer might have noticed many subtle changes that came over Mr. Horace Bopp during these weeks. His thin shoulders straightened a little; his cough was so improved that he often forgot to carry the box of cough drops with him these days, and, for the first time in his life he began to see that his shoes were always polished and his trousers always neatly pressed. He bought himself a double-breasted blue suit such as he had seen the Viking wear—and it became him surprisingly well. He even surveyed himself in the mirror one morning with the faint idea of growing a Van Dyke—but he knew that it was rather a hopeless task and, even if fortune favored him, the results might be more disconcerting than otherwise.

Then while the warmth of young September still lay upon the city Mr. Graham Esham chose to return.

Horace had never ventured to sit at the same table with Miss Hudson, but he had formed the habit of stopping there on his way out and asking, "Shall we go somewhere tonight, Miss Hudson?"

The first knowledge of Esham's return that came to Mr. Bopp was the September night when he stopped and asked her that and she looked at him a little defiantly, a little sadly, and with a great pity for him in her eyes.

"He's back," she answered.

Try as he would, bolstered up as he was by the double-breasted blue suit, Mr. Bopp drooped a trifle.

"Then—our little parties are over?" he asked.

She put her hand on his arm. "Have I—hurt you so much?"

He shook a vigorous denial, but he found no words would come, so he stumbled out.

For a week Horace Bopp had the very unpleasant experience of one who having lived on a blessed isle is snatched from it and set down in a cell with only four grey walls to look upon, with only a grey stone floor to pace.

At the end of that week, one rainy night at half-past ten, there came a knock on his door. Fortunately Mr. Bopp had given up the habit of going to bed early (which he had acquired in his Personal Efficiency days) because he knew there is not much pleasure in tossing sleepless on a hard bed, and therefore he was properly clothed to receive visitors. And this visitor was Sylvia Hudson.

She entered quickly and stood leaning her tall height against the mantel. She was exceedingly quiet and calm, except for her hands, which kept fumbling one with the other.

"My friend," she said presently, "I have come to ask you a great favor—perhaps the last I shall ever ask you."

Mr. Bopp was so overjoyed at seeing her again that he had only sense suffi-

cient to say, "Anything—anything you ask."

"Mr. Esham goes to Canada to-night," she continued, fixing Mr. Bopp with her unhappy eyes, "and—and he wants me to go with him."

"Yes," said Mr. Bopp, knowing nothing else to say, but with a great torrent of bitter, shrieking, pulsating things left unsaid within him.

"I have no right to go with him. He—she already has a wife—a wife whom I honor more, oh, infinitely more, than I do Mr. Esham—and yet—and yet"—she bowed her head then and hid her eyes from his as if she were ashamed of the look that was in them at that moment—"and yet, I do not know whether I have the strength not to go with him."

"Let me see him! Let me tell him what I think of him! Where is he?" cried Horace Bopp desperately.

She smiled and shook her head. "I'm afraid that would do little good—but this is what I want you to do. I am to meet him at the station at quarter to eleven. I want you to come up with me and wait outside for me. It will give me strength to know that someone is waiting for me to come back. I pray God I shall have that strength, yet I fear I shall not have it. I may come back; I may not. But will you come and wait for me?"

Mr. Bopp was already busy with his hat and coat. "Do we go now?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. "I have a cab downstairs waiting, but you must promise me one thing—"

"Yes."

"You will make no attempt to follow me into the station."

Reluctantly Mr. Bopp promised.

So they set forth. It was a tense and silent ride. At his feet Mr. Bopp could feel a bag and at the significance of that bag he blanched a little. Reaching down he grasped its handle firmly, as if defying anyone to wrest it from him. Somehow that gave him reassurance of a sort.

At Forty-second Street Miss Hudson

sent the cab on its way and made to take the bag from Horace's firm grip. He would not yield it.

She smiled at him sadly.

"After all," she said, "that is not the essential thing."

And Mr. Bopp swore. I set that down as a momentous fact.

"Oh, damn it!" swore Mr. Bopp and gave her the bag.

"You wait right here," she said, leaving him at an entrance.

And Mr. Bopp waited. Meanwhile, the rain pelted down. Mr. Bopp, for once in his life, had neglected to bring his umbrella. There was a doorway in back of him and he tried to shove himself into its protection. But the rain was that peculiarly exasperating kind of rain which delights in blowing itself into every available corner. Mockingly it dangled its long, wet fingers around Mr. Bopp, vigorously it assailed him; if its purpose was to drown him it at least succeeded half-way. But not for his very life would Mr. Bopp have moved from that spot where Sylvia Hudson had told him to wait.

On that rainy night even populous Forty-second Street was deserted. A few black, crouching figures fought their way up and down against the storm; a newsboy with a bundle of wet papers forlornly cried his wares from the shelter the overhead station of the elevated road afforded; a few taxicabs, gleaming black, sleek with the wet, prowled the streets.

Mr. Bopp, in his doorway, shrank back a little further, tried to wrap his overcoat about him more closely.

But he thought little of the rain. He only thought of her. Terrific visions sprang before him. He could see her refuse to go, could see the Viking pick her up and carry her off against her own will. That vision almost sent him into the station. But then another flashed before him. He could see them meet, the two heroic creatures, could see her eyes upon him with the look that Horace remembered so well. That stayed him. Somehow, he felt he could not gaze upon those two together

in that way, ever again. It hurt too much. It cut too deep. There were some things which even Horace, the meek, could not stand.

He began to cough in a hacking, dry little way, and he tried to fish out his cough drops from an inner pocket. Then he remembered that he no longer always carried cough drops with him.

He was coughing so hard that he was bent over with it and did not see her return. He did not see her till she stood over him.

"Oh, how wet you are!" she exclaimed. "How horrid and thoughtless it was of me to leave you here."

But Mr. Bopp did not hear her words. He heard nothing; he saw nothing. All his senses were concentrated into one ecstatic pæan of thanks.

"She didn't go!" they sang. "She didn't go!" And then in a minor key, more modestly, "And I helped to keep her!"

She brought him to himself with a firm hand upon his soaked sleeve.

"Quick! Let's get a cab!"

Horace summoned one of the prowling cabs and they climbed into it. Then he noticed how white she was; her pallor shone out of the dimness of the cab like a grey mask. And she seemed stunned, stunned into a dreadful immobility.

"Do you know that he did, what my beloved did, when I told him I would not go with him?" her husky, bruised voice asked, and she laughed without mirth, staring straight ahead of her as if she had forgotten that Mr. Bopp was beside her. "Do you know what he did? He struck me. Across the lips he struck me."

With that she suddenly went all crumpled and soft. She fell over into Mr. Bopp's arms. In a panic of agony he realized she had fainted.

So they returned to Mrs. Phillips' select *pension* in Madison Avenue. Before the cynical eyes of the chauffeur, Mr. Bopp carried her up the stairs, stumbling and panting beneath her dead weight. Somehow he managed to get her to her own room and lay her on

her own white bed. Intuition told him this was kinder than to summon Mrs. Phillips or any of her refined guests. With trembling fingers he removed her damp coat and unbuttoned her waist at the throat. Then he sprinkled a few drops of water upon her face and presently she sat up, shoving her disheveled hair into place.

"Are you all right now?" he asked. "You know you fainted."

"Yes. I'm all right," she answered, after a dazed moment. Then abruptly she put her two arms around Mr. Bopp's neck as he stooped anxiously over her—and she kissed him. "Good night—and thank you, my friend."

VI

Now, as the writers say, time passed. But it was time that made very little difference to Mr. Horace Bopp, the erstwhile devotee of Personal Efficiency. How much time passed and the nature of that time did not count for much with Horace because for all of it he lay in bed, sometimes very quiet—so quiet that the woman who sat beside him put her ear close to his thin little chest to see if time had ceased forever to make any difference to him—sometimes, delirious, uttering wild thoughts and desires that he would never have dared utter if he were in his right senses. But the woman beside the bed heard them all and listened to them all. Almost hungrily she listened. For they were balm to a heart that had known many blows and bruises. Sometimes she wept a little at them and sometimes she simply smiled quietly, with gentle eyes from which the unhappy look, day by day, was gradually vanishing.

Then, one crisp October afternoon, when the crisis had passed and the doctor had assured her that Everything Would Be All Right Again, she knelt beside the bed and she said to herself,

"I don't see why he wants to bother with me. But if I can make him happy"—and she took his limp, unconscious hand and pressed her lips against it.

WHAT HE WANTED TO SAY

By Helene Hicks Bowen

AS they fumbled into their seats at the large round table the man glanced at her place-card and, under cover of the caviare, murmured amiably:

"How dare you have a husband, you wild-rose person? You don't look in the least married. I was completely fooled by your girlish look of innocence. Now I suppose we must be careful, since I—"

She gasped and paled effectively.

"You must not talk to me like that," she interrupted.

Then, as he started to speak again,

"Ah, no, no, get yourself in hand. It is very beautiful that our lives should touch like this; I, too, feel the urge of a kindred spirit; the charm of the individual *you* acting upon my own shrinking ego; but we must crush this exquisite blossom. I have loved once, and although that is now a thing of the past, the experience was too painful; although I am again free I will not let myself care a second time."

It was his turn to gasp, but she hurried on:

"I feel it only right that nothing but truth should lie between us for the space of this brief contact. I am a widow, true, but I shall never marry again.

"Hush!" she continued, as he tried to break in. "There is no use in your

coaxing me; after this interlude you must go your way, and I shall again take up my burden of loneliness, with only the souvenir of a single joyous memory to link our lives."

Again he essayed to interrupt, his face working strangely, but she would not have it, and shook her head.

"It might be different if I were one of those who are content to philander, but I am too intense, too ardent for that. I cannot accept your devotion, it would not be right, when I have so little to offer in return. I see that you also like olives," nibbling daintily at a little green ball—he had already feverishly gobbled the portion upon his relish dish—"even our physical natures are in perfect attune.

"No, no, do not say it," she urged, as he mouthed spasmodically. "We must be satisfied with this single glimpse into each other's souls. I know that, manlike, arrogant in your own freedom, you would beg me to kill my scruples and be happy at all hazards."

Languishingly she bathed her eyes in his.

"I wasn't going to beg you to do anything of the kind," he blurted out; "I was only trying to warn you that my wife is watching us narrowly from across the table, and that she's a *very* unsympathetic woman."



LIGHT UPON DARKNESS

By L. S. Mayer

THE train stopped at Elkhart for ten minutes. When it gathered itself together with a chug and again plunged into the path of the sun, every man, woman and child in coach No. 17 knew there was a Presence aboard. In the motley crowd of a day-car a Presence is seldom noted for the one reason that ninety-nine times out of a hundred he hasn't any. The railway magnate choosing to so travel has nothing to distinguish him from his twenty-dollar-a-week clerk. His clothing is cut no better, he is no better groomed and his air of assurance is frequently not so pronounced. A great man of letters may be buffeted about in that flowing tidal stream with no outward and visible sign to stamp him as one of the elect. Or Clotilde in gathered wimple may slip down the aisle, her sainthood unsuspected.

But there was no lack of recognition of this particular Presence. All that has been written in song or story of heavenly movement was summed up in her passage to that vacant left-centre seat. The whole car thrilled to it and bent its gaze left-centreward, but she seemed not to know that she was attracting attention. It was the unconscious grace of a young angel going down one of the streets of Paradise.

The fine black raiment she wore from matchless throat to silken, slender ankle clothed an Aglaia. Nature's supreme touch was upon that glorious form, so softly outlined by the clinging crêpe. And suddenly every other woman in the car became a frump.

The head is held belligerently erect by some women. Others thrust it forward, unpleasantly inquisitive, and oth-

ers affect a jaunty angle. The Presence carried hers as if she were wearing a crown. That proud lift was altogether royal. But instead of a crown it was a smart black turban with an attractively-angled bow, draped with a short, black veil, the lace edges so caught together at the back as to completely conceal the features of her delicate oval face. A baffling arrangement and one calculated to put the best breeding in the world severely to the test.

Maitland capitulated at once. Maitland—painter of beautiful women with his ideal floating ever just before. He began raving to me in an undertone the minute she was seated. He had found her at last, after running all over the world for fifteen years. Nothing like it outside the Louvre. "God, man! Look at the poise of that head! At those shoulders! The lines of that form!" Already he could see her on the canvas, a branch of pink blossoms back of her—a spring-song of loveliness. Only instead of black she should be swathed in pale-green gauze.

And he looked daggers at the conductor who was explaining the timetable to her—an explanation of inordinate and unnecessary length.

He was not alone. The whole male contingent aboard had been hit in varying degrees. Old men straightened up and their weak eyes flashed with the fire of twenty. Fat men smoothed down their waistcoats and thin ones bulged out their chests to surprising circumference. A drummer stopped polishing his nails and cast furtive glances in a folded pocket-mirror before glueing his eyes on the goddess

for the rest of her journey. Two big, good-looking college boys sitting just in front of Maitland and me avowed their intention of getting off at the next station (*hers* we had overheard her tell the conductor in a voice as vibrantly sweet as the D string of a viola), although their destination was twenty miles beyond.

Women feigned not to notice but secretly, admiringly, enviously, their glances flicked her way every few minutes, her astounding grace and high-bred air compelling them.

Speculation was heavy as to her type of beauty, for beautiful she must be every man-jack of us agreed to himself. "The good Lord would never make a form like that without a face to match it," said a bald-headed clergyman just back of me, leaning over to whisper. His companion, who looked like an old actor, compared her statuesque lines to those of Rachel in the days of her young, conquering glory. "The face is probably pure Greek," he said. "I can tell by the classic outline and the set of the head. The Greek of the marble goddesses so difficult to find these modern days, even in Greece."

The train rushed through green, garlanded plains, but no one paid any attention to the scenery.

The college boys, Bob and "Pinkie," were already in a far stage of imaginary acquaintance with the goddess. She had motored with Bob through all the towns in which he had friends, to their envy and open-mouthed admiration, while Pinkie had wandered with her by still waters upon which lay yellow moonlight, and listened to the sighing of the south wind as he pressed her divine hand.

The train slowed down. Maitland leaned to me: "Jack, I must paint that woman! It will be my fortune. I can't let her slip from me. I'm not a fool

like those boys there, but I've got to find out where she goes. I've got to know her. I tell you it's *she*! I never was so excited in my life. She may be a royal princess travelling incognito but I'll manage it somehow."

When we reached the station the Presence was the first to rise. Again that triumphant passage, unconscious, lofty, the passengers ranged on each side like so many vassals. She went down the steps as lightly as a floating blossom.

"Here's where I get off," said Bob. He of the dream of still waters followed him. Maitland was not far behind.

Those of us remaining crowded to the windows on the station side. Some one would be there to meet her and she would lift her veil! The mystery behind that opaque thickness would be revealed. Calm, serene, with the fine indifference of the thoroughbred, she stood on the platform directly facing our coach. Evidently waiting, but who could make that glorious creature *wait*!

The bell clanged. In two minutes the train would start. Were we to be brought to the door of All Perfection and denied a glimpse therein? I wished I had followed Maitland. He stood just below my window and I leaned out and put my hand on his shoulder. The suspense was becoming unbearable.

Suddenly one delicately gloved hand went to her veil and lingered there. Had she seen some one approaching? Interest in the car concentrated itself in one tense, breathless stare. Said Maitland, "This is my supreme hour."

The veil fell back and for five gasping, wonder-eyed seconds she returned our gaze. Then with a faint smile—a smile that had a hint of mockery in it, the young, full-blooded African disappeared into the crowd.



SOME LADIES AND JURGEN

By James Branch Cabell

Author of "The Cream of the Jest," etc.

I

IN the old days lived a poet named Jurgen; but what his wife called him was very often much worse than that. She was a high-spirited woman, with no especial gift for silence. Well, in the old days Jurgen was passing the Cistercian Abbey, and one of the monks had tripped over a stone in the roadway. He was cursing the devil who had placed it there.

"Fie, brother!" says Jurgen, "and have not the devils enough to bear as it is?"

"I never held with Origen," replied the monk; "and, besides, it hurt my great toe confoundedly."

"None the less," observes Jurgen, "it does not behoove God-fearing persons to speak with disrespect of the divinely appointed Prince of Darkness. Then, to your further confusion, consider this monarch's industry! Day and night you may detect him toiling at the task Heaven set him. That is a thing can be said of few communicants and of no monks. Think, too, of his fine artistry, as evinced in all the perilous and lovely snares of this world, which it is your business to combat, and mine to make verses about! Why, but for him we would both be vocationless. Then, moreover, consider his philanthropy! and deliberate how insufferable would be our case if you and I, and all of us, were today hobnobbing with all other beasts in the Garden which we pretend to desiderate on Sundays! To arise with swine and lie down with the hyena?—oh, intolerable!" So he ran on, devising reasons for not thinking too harshly of the devil. Most of it

was an abridgement of his own verses.

"I consider that to be stuff and nonsense," was the monk's glose.

"No doubt your notion is sensible," observed the poet; "but mine is the prettier. . . ."

Well, and then Jurgen met a black gentleman, who saluted him and said:

"Thanks, Jurgen, for your good word."

"Who are you, and why do you thank me?" asks Jurgen.

"My name is no great matter. But you have a kind heart, Jurgen. May your life be free from care!"

"Glory be to God, friend, but I am already married."

"Eh, sirs, and a fine, clever poet like you! No matter, the morning is brighter than the evening. How I will reward you, to be sure."

So Jurgen thanked him politely. And when Jurgen reached home his wife was nowhere to be seen. He looked on all sides and questioned everyone, but to no avail. So he crossed himself, prepared his own supper, went to bed, and slept soundly.

"I have implicit confidence," says he, "in Lisa. I have particular confidence in her ability to take care of herself, in any surroundings."

That was all very well: but time passed, and presently it began to be rumored that Lisa walked on Morven. Her brother, who was a grocer and a member of the town council, went thither to see about this report. And sure enough, there was Jurgen's wife walking in the twilight and muttering incessantly.

"Fie, sister!" says the town councillor, "this is very unseemly conduct

for a married woman, and a thing likely to be talked about."

"Follow me!" replied Dame Lisa. And the town counsellor followed her a little way, in the dusk, but when she came to Amneran Heath and still went onward, he knew better than to follow.

Next evening the elder sister of Dame Lisa went to Morven. This sister had married a notary, and was a shrewd woman. In consequence she took with her this evening a long wand of peeled willow-wood. And there was Jurgen's wife walking in the twilight and muttering incessantly.

"Fie, sister!" says the notary's wife, who was a shrewd woman, "and do you not know that all this while Jurgen does his own sewing, and is once more making eyes at the Countess Varvara?"

Dame Lisa shuddered; but she only said, "Follow me!"

So the notary's wife followed her to Amneran Heath, and across Amneran Heath to where a cave was. This was a place of abominable repute. . . . A lean hound came to them there in the twilight, lolling his tongue: but the notary's wife struck twice with her wand, and the silent beast left them. And Lisa went silently into the cave, and her sister turned and went home to her children, weeping.

So the next evening Jurgen himself came to Morven, because all his wife's family assured him this was the manly thing to do. He followed his wife across Amneran Heath until they reached the cave. The poet would willingly have been elsewhere. For the hound squatted upon his haunches, and seemed to grin at Jurgen: and there were other creatures abroad that flew low in the twilight, keeping close to the ground like owls; but they were larger than owls, and were more discomforting.

Jurgen said, a little peevishly:

"Lisa, my dear, if you go into the cave I will have to follow you, because it is the manly thing to do. And you know how easily I take cold."

The voice of Lisa was as the rustle of dead leaves.

"There is a cross about your neck. You must throw that away."

And indeed, Jurgen was wearing such a cross, through motives of sentiment, because it had once belonged to his dead mother.

But now, to pleasure his wife—"I am embarking upon an apologue," was his appraisal—he removed the trinket, and hung it on a barberry bush; and with the reflection that this was likely to prove a deplorable business, he followed Lisa into the cave.

Well, all was dark there, and Jurgen could see no one. But the cave stretched straight forward, and downward, and at the far end was a glow of light.

So Jurgen went on and on, and, after divers happenings which do not here concern us, he came to a notable place where seven cresset lights were burning. These lights were the power of Assyria, and Babylon, and Nineveh, and Egypt, and Rome, and Athens, and Byzantium: and six other cressets stood ready there, but fire had not yet been laid to these. And here was the black gentleman, in a black dressing-gown that was embroidered with all the signs of the Zodiac. He sat at a table, the top of which was curiously inlaid with thirty pieces of silver: and he was copying entries from one big book into another.

"You find me busy with my accounts," says he, "which augment daily—But what more can I do for you, Jurgen?"

"I have been thinking, Prince—" begins the poet.

"And why do you call me a prince, Jurgen?"

"I do not know, sir. But I suspect you are Koschei the Deathless."

The black gentleman nodded. "Something of the sort. Koschei, or Norka, or Chudo-Yudo—it is all one what I may be called hereabouts. My real name you never heard: no man has ever heard my name. So that matter we need hardly go into."

"Precisely, Prince. And I have been thinking that my wife's society is per-

haps becoming a trifle burdensome to you."

"Eh, sirs, I cannot report that I enjoy it. But I am not unaccustomed to women. I may truthfully say that as I find them, so do I take them. And I was willing to oblige a fellow rebel."

"But I do not know, Prince, that I have ever rebelled—"

"You make verses, Jurgen. And all poetry is man's rebellion against being what the creature unluckily is."

"Well, be that as it may, Prince! But I do not know that you have obliged me."

"Why, Jurgen," says the black gentleman, in high astonishment, "do you mean to tell me that you want the plague of your life back again?"

"I do not know about that, either, sir. She was certainly very hard to live with. On the other hand, I had become used to having her about. I rather miss her."

Now the black gentleman meditated.

"Come, friend," he says, at last, "you are a poet of some merit. You display a promising talent which might be cleverly developed, in any suitable environment. The trouble is"—and he lowered his voice to a whisper that was truly diabolical—"the trouble is that your wife does not understand you. She is hindering your art. Yes, that precisely sums it up: she is interfering with your soul-development, and your instinctive need of self-expression, and all that sort of thing. You are very well rid of her. To the other side, as is with point observed somewhere or other, it is not good for man to live alone. But, friend, I have just the wife for you—"

Then Koschei waved his hand; and there, quick as a wink, was the loveliest lady that Jurgen had ever imagined. Fair was she to look upon, with her shining gray eyes and small, smiling lips, a fairer woman might no man boast of having seen. And she regarded Jurgen graciously, with her cheeks red and white, very lovely to observe. She was clothed in a robe of flame-colored silk, and about her neck was a collar of red gold. When she spoke

her voice was music. And she told him that she was Queen Guenevere.

"But Launcelot is turned monk, at Glastonbury; and Arthur is gone into Avalon," says she; "and I will be your wife if you will have me, Messire Jurgen."

The poet was troubled.

"For you make me think myself a god," says Jurgen. "Madame Guenevere, when man recognized himself to be Heaven's vicar upon earth, it was to serve and to glorify and to protect you and your radiant sisterhood that man consecrated his existence. You were beautiful, and you were frail; you were half goddess and half bric-à-brac. Ohimé, I recognize the call of chivalry, and my heart-strings resound: yet, for innumerable reasons, I hesitate to take you for my wife, and to concede myself your appointed protector, responsible as such to Heaven. For one matter, I am not altogether sure that I am Heaven's vicar here upon earth. I cannot but suspect that Omniscience would have selected some more competent representative."

"It is so written, Messire Jurgen."

Jurgen shrugged. "I, too, have written much that is beautiful. Very often my verses were so beautiful that I would have given anything in the world in exchange for somewhat less sure information as to the author's veracity. Ah, no, madame, desire and knowledge are pressing me so sorely that, between them, I dare not love you, and still I cannot help it."

Then Jurgen gave a little wringing gesture with his hands. His smile was not merry.

"Madame and queen," says he, "there was once a man who worshipped all women. To him they were one and all of sacred, sweet, intimidating beauty. He shaped sonorous rhymes of this, in praise of the mystery and sanctity of women. Then several ladies made much of him, because, good lack, 'he understood women.' That was very unfortunate: for more reasons than one, all poets should be kept away from petticoats. So a little by a little he be-

gan to suspect that women, also, are akin to their parents; and are no wiser, and no more subtle, and no more immaculate, than the father who begot them. Madame and queen, it is not good for any man to suspect this."

"It is certainly not the conduct of a chivalrous person, nor of an authentic poet," says Queen Guenevere. "And yet your eyes are big with tears."

"Hah, madame," he replied, "but it amuses me to weep for a dead man with eyes that once were his."

Now said Queen Guenevere:

"Farewell to you, then, Jorgen, for it is I that am leaving you forever. I was the lovely and excellent master-work of God: in Caerleon and North-galis and at Joyeuse Garde might men behold me with delight, because to view me was to comprehend the power and kindness of their Creator. Very beautiful was Iseult, and the face of Luned sparkled like a moving gem; Morgaine and Viviane and shrewd Nimuë were lovely, too; and the comeliness of Ettarre exalted the beholder like proud music: these, going about Arthur's hall, seemed Heaven's finest craftsmanship until the Queen came to her dais, as the moon among glowing stars: men then affirmed that God in making Guenevere had used both hands. My beauty was no human white and red, said they, but a proud sign of Heaven's might. In approaching me, men thought of God, because in me, they said, His splendor was incarnate. That which I willed was neither right nor wrong: it was divine. This thing it was that the knights saw in me; this surety, as to the power and generosity of their great Father, it was of which the chevaliers of yesterday were conscious in beholding me, and of men's need to be worthy of such parentage: and it is I that am leaving you forever."

Said Jorgen:

"It is a sorrowful thing that is happening to me. I am become as a rudderless boat that goes from wave to wave: I am turned to unfertile dust that a windwhirl makes coherent and presently lets fall. And so farewell to

you, Queen Guenevere, for it is a sorrowful thing that is happening to me."

Thus he cried farewell to the daughter of Gogyran. And instantly she vanished like the flame of a blownout altar-candle. . . .

II

THEN came to Jorgen that Queen Anaitis who very long ago was the bright bane of nations. Words may not describe her loveliness. And she talked of marvelous things. Of the lore of Thaïs she spoke, and of the schooling of Sappho, and of the secrets of Rhodopë, and of the mourning for Adonis.

"For we have but a little while to live, and thereafter none knows his fate. A man possesses nothing certainly save a brief loan of his own body: and yet the body of man is capable of much curious pleasure. As thus and thus," says she.

And the bright-colored woman spoke with antique directness of matters that Jorgen found rather embarrassing.

"Come, come!" thinks he, "but it will never do to seem provincial. I believe that I am actually blushing."

Aloud he said:

"Sweetheart, there was once a youth who sought quite zealously for the overmastering frenzies you prattle about. But, candidly, he could not find the flesh whose touch would rouse insanity. The lad had opportunities, too, let me tell you! Hah, I recall with tenderness the glitter of eyes and hair, and the gay garments, and the soft voices of those fond, foolish women, even now! But he went from one pair of lips to another, with an ardor that was always half-feigned, and with protestations that were conscious echoes of some romance or other. Such escapades were pleasant enough; but they were not very serious, after all. For these things concerned his body alone: and I am more than an edifice of viands reared by my teeth. To pretend that what my body does or endures is of importance, seems rather silly now-

adays. I prefer to regard it as a necessary beast of burden which I maintain, at considerable expense and trouble. So I shall make no more pother over it."

But then again Queen Anaitis spoke of marvelous things; and he listened, fair-mindedly, for the queen spoke of that which was hers to share with him.

"In Babylon I have a temple where many women sit with cords about them and burn bran for perfume, while they await that thing which is to befall them. In Armenia I have a temple surrounded by vast gardens, where only strangers have the right to enter: they there receive a hospitality that is more than gallant. In Paphos I have a temple wherein is a little pyramid of white stones, very curious to see: but still more curious is the statue in my temple at Amathus, of a bearded woman, which displays other features that women do not possess. And in Alexandria I have a temple that is tended by thirty-six exceedingly wise and sacred persons, and wherein it is always night: and there men seek for monstrous pleasures, even at the price of instant death, and win to both of these swiftly. Everywhere my temples stand upon high places near the sea: so they are beheld from afar by those whom I hold dearest, my beautiful broad-chested, hairy mariners, who do not fear even me, but know that in my temples they will find notable employment. For I must tell you of what is to be encountered within these places that are mine, and of how pleasantly we pass our time there."

So she told him. . . .

Now he listened more attentively than before, and his eyes were narrowed, and his lips were lax and motionless and foolish-looking.

To Jurgén this queen's voice was all a horrible and strange and lovely magic.

Then Jurgén growled and shook himself, half-angrily; and he tweaked the ear of Queen Anaitis.

"Sweetheart," says he, "you paint a glowing picture; but you are shrewd

enough to borrow your pigments from the daydreams of inexperience. What you prattle about is not at all as you describe it. Also, you forget you are talking to a married man of some years' standing. Moreover, I shudder to think of what might happen if Lisa were to walk in unexpectedly. And for the rest, you come a deal too late, my lass, so that all this to-do over nameless sins and unspeakable caresses and other anonymous antics seems rather naïve. My ears are beset by eloquent gray hairs which plead at closer quarters than does that fibbing little tongue of yours. And so be off with you."

With that Queen Anaitis smiled very cruelly and said:

"Farewell to you, then, Jurgén, for it is I that am leaving you forever. Henceforward you must fret away much sunlight by interminably shunning discomfort and by indulging tepid preferences. For I, and none but I, can waken that desire which uses all of a man, and so wastes nothing, even though it leave that favored man forever after like wan ashes in the sunlight. And with you I have no more to do. Join with your graying fellows, then! and help them to affront the clean, sane sunlight by making guilds and laws and solemn phrases wherewith to rid the world of me! I, Anaitis, laugh, and my heart is a wave in the sunlight. For there is no power like my power, and no living thing which can withstand my power: and those who deride me, as I well know, are but the emptied dead, dry husks that a wind moves, with hissing noises, while I harvest in open sunlight. For I am the desire that uses all of a man; and it is I that am leaving you forever."

Said Jurgén:

"Again it is a sorrowful thing that is happening to me. I am become as a puzzled ghost that furtively observes the doings of loud-voiced, ruddy persons; and I am compact of weariness and apprehension, for I no longer discern what thing is I, nor what is my desire, and I fear that I am already dead. So farewell to you, Queen

Anaitis, for this, too, is a sorrowful thing that is happening to me."

Thus he cried farewell to the Sun's daughter. And all the colors of her loveliness flickered and merged into the likeness of a tall, thin flame, that aspired; and then this flame was extinguished. . . .

III

Now silently came Queen Helen. She said nothing at all, because there was no need. But, beholding her, Jurgen kneeled. He hid his face in her white robe, and stayed thus, without speaking, for a long while.

"Lady of my vision," he said, and his voice broke, "assuredly I believe that your father was that ardent bird which nestled very long ago in Leda's bosom. And now Troy's sons are all in Hades' keeping, in the world below; fire has consumed the walls of Troy, and the years have forgotten her proud conquerors: but still you are bringing woe on woe on hapless sufferers." And again his voice broke. For the world seemed cheerless, and like a house that none has lived in for many years.

Then, with queer pride, he raised his time-lined countenance, much as a man condemned might turn to the executioner.

"Lady, if you indeed be the Swan's daughter, very long ago there was a child that was ill. And his illness turned to a fever, and in his fever he arose from his bed one night, saying that he must set out for Troy, because of his love for Queen Helen. I was once that child. I remember how strange it seemed to me that I should be talking such nonsense; I remember how the warm room smelt of drugs; and I remember how I pitied the trouble in my nurse's face, drawn and old in the yellow lamplight. For she loved me, and she did not understand; and she pleaded with me to be a good boy and not to worry my sleeping parents. But I perceive now that I was not talking nonsense. Yours is the beauty which all poets know to exist, some-

where, and which life, as men have contrived it thus far, does not anywhere afford. For that beauty I have hungered always. Toward that beauty I have struggled always, but not quite whole-heartedly. That night forecast my life. I have hungered for you; and"—he laughed here—"and I have always stayed a passably good boy, lest I should beyond reason disturb my family."

And Queen Helen, the delight of gods and men, said nothing at all, because there was no need. For the man who has once glimpsed her loveliness is beyond saving, and beyond the desire of being saved.

"Tonight," says Jurgen, "through the shrewd art of Koshchei, it appears that you stand within arm's reach. Hah, lady, were that possible—and I know very well it is not possible, whatever my senses may report—I am not fit to mate with your perfection. At the bottom of my heart I no longer desire perfection. For we that are taxpayers as well as immortal souls must live by politic evasions and formulæ and catchwords that fret away our lives as moths waste a garment: we fall insensibly to common sense as to a drug; and it dulls and kills that which in us is fine and rebellious and unreasonable: so that you will find no man of my years with whom living is not a mechanism that gnaws away time unprompted. I am become the creature of use and wont; I am the lackey of prudence and half-measures; and I have put my dreams upon an allowance. Yet even now I love you more than I love costly foods and indolence and flattery. What more can an old poet say? For that reason, lady, I pray you begone, because your loveliness is a taunt that I find unendurable."

But his voice yearned, because this was Queen Helen, the delight of gods and men, who regarded him with grave, kind eyes. She seemed to view, as one appraises the pattern of an unrolled carpet, every action of Jurgen's life: and she seemed, too, to wonder, without reproach or trouble, how men could

be so foolish and of their own accord become so miry.

"Oh, I have failed my vision!" cries Jurgen. "I have failed, and I know very well that every man must fail; and yet my shame is no less bitter. For I am transmuted by time's handling! I shudder at the thought of living day in and day out with my vision! And so I will have none of you for my wife."

Then, trembling, Jurgen raised toward his lips the hand of her who was the world's darling.

"And so farewell to you, Queen Helen! Oh, very often in a woman's face I have found this or that feature wherein she resembled you, and for the sake of it have served that woman blindly. And all my verses, as I know now, were vain enchantments striving to evoke that hidden loveliness of which I knew by dim report alone until to-night. Oh, all my life was a foiled quest of you, Queen Helen, who came too late. Yes, certainly, it should be graved upon my tomb, *Queen Helen ruled this earth while it stayed worthy*. . . . But that was very long ago. To-day I ride no more a-questing anything: instead, I potter after hearthside comforts, and play the physician with myself, and strive painstakingly to make old bones. And no man's notion anywhere seems worth a cup of mulled wine; and for the sake of no notion would I endanger the routine which so hideously bores me. For I am transmuted by time's handling; I have become the lackey of prudence and half-measures: and so, farewell to you, Queen Helen, for I have failed in the service of my vision, and I deny you utterly!"

Thus he cried farewell to the Swan's daughter; and Queen Helen vanished as a bright mist passes, not departing swiftly as had done the other two; and Jurgen was alone with the black gentleman. . . .

IV

"COME, come!" observed Koshchei the Deathless, "but you are certainly hard to please."

Well, Jurgen was already intent to shrug off his displayal of emotion.

"In selecting a wife, sir," submitted Jurgen, "there are all sorts of matters to be considered. Whatever the first impulse of the moment, it was apparent to any reflective person that in the past of each of these ladies there was much to suggest inborn inaptitude for domestic life. And I am a peace-loving fellow, sir; nor do I hold with moral laxity, except, of course, in talk when it promotes sociability, and in verse-making, wherein it is esteemed as a conventional ornament. Still, Prince, the chance I lost! I do not refer to matrimony, you conceive. But in the presence of these famous fair ones with what glowing words I ought to have spoken! upon a wondrous ladder of strophes, metaphors and recondite allusions, to what stylistic heights of Asiatic prose I ought to have ascended! And instead, I twaddled like a schoolmaster. Decidedly, Lisa is right, and I am good-for-nothing. However," he added hopefully, "it appeared to me that this evening Lisa was somewhat less outspoken than usual."

"Eh, sirs, but she was under a very potent spell. I found that necessary, in the interest of law and order hereabouts. We are not accustomed to the excesses of practical persons who are ruthlessly bent upon reforming their associates. Indeed, it is one of the advantages of my situation that such folk rarely come my way." And the black gentleman in turn shrugged. "You will pardon me, but I am positively committed to help out an archbishop with some of his churchwork this evening, and there is a rather important assassination to be instigated at Vienna. So time presses. Meanwhile, you have inspected the flower of womanhood; and I cannot soberly believe that you prefer your termagant of a wife."

"Frankly, Prince, I also am, as usual, undecided. Could you let me see her, for just a moment?"

This was no sooner asked than done: for there, sure enough, was Dame Lisa. She was no longer restricted to quiet

speech by any stupendous necromancy, and seemed peevish: and uncommonly plain she looked, after the passing of those lovely ladies.

"Well, you rascal!" begins Dame Lisa, addressing Jurgen, "and so you thought to be rid of me! Oh, a precious lot you are! and a deal of thanks I get for my scrimping and slaving!" And she began scolding away. She said he was even worse than the Countess Varvara.

But rather unaccountably Jurgen fell to thinking of the years they had shared together; of the fine and merry girl that Lisa had been before she married him; and of how well she knew his tastes in cookery and all his other little preferences; and of how cleverly she humored them on those rare days when nothing had occurred to vex her: and of how much more unpleasant—everything considered—life was without her than with her. And his big, foolish heart was half yearning and half penitence.

"I think I will take her back, Prince," says he, very quietly. "For I do not know but that it is as hard on her as on me."

"My friend, do you forget the poet that you might be, even yet? No rational person would dispute that the society and amiable chat of Dame Lisa is a desideratum—"

But Dame Lisa was always resentful of long words. "Be silent, you black scoffer! and do not allude to such disgraceful things in the presence of respectable people! For I am a decent Christian woman, I would have you understand. But everybody knows your reputation! and a very fit companion you are for that scamp yonder. Jurgen, I always told you you would come to this, and now I hope you are satisfied. Jurgen, do not stand there with your mouth open, like a scared fish, when I ask you a civil question! but answer when you are spoken to! and do not say a single word to me, Jurgen, because I am disgusted with you. For, Jurgen, you heard perfectly well what your very suitable friend just said

about me. No, do not ask me what he said, Jurgen! I leave that to your conscience. So, if my own husband has not the feelings of a man, and cannot protect me from insults and low company, I had best be going home and getting supper ready. I daresay the house is like a pigsty. And to think of your going about in public, even among such associates, with a button off your shirt! You are enough to drive a person mad: and I warn you that I am done with you forever."

And Dame Lisa walked with dignity toward the mouth of the cave. "So you can come with me, or not, precisely as you elect. It is all one to me, I can assure you, after the cruel things you have said. But I shall stop by for a word with that high-and-mighty Varvara on the way home. You two need never think to hoodwink me about your goings-on."

And with that Dame Lisa went away, still talking.

V

"PHEW!" said Koshchei, in the ensuing silence; "you had better stay overnight, in any event. I really think, friend, you will be more comfortable, just now at least, with me."

But Jurgen had taken up his caftan. "No, I daresay I had better be going too," says Jurgen. "I thank you very heartily for your intended kindness, sir, still I do not know but it is better as it is. And is there anything?"—he coughed delicately—"and is there anything to pay, sir?"

"Well, not, of course, for the freedom of Dame Lisa. We very rarely molest the wives of poets. It is not considered sportsmanlike. But I must tell you it is not permitted any person to leave my presence unimpaired. One must have rules, you know."

"You would chop off an arm? or a hand? or a whole finger? Come now, Prince, you must be joking!"

Koshchei the Deathless was very grave as he sat there, in meditation, drumming with his long fingers upon

the table-top that was curiously inlaid with thirty pieces of silver. In the lamplight his sharp nails glittered like flame-points. "Eh, sir, the toll which I exact you have already paid, though not to me. You have retained nothing that I esteem worth taking. So you, friend, may depart unhindered whenever you will."

Jurgen meditated this clemency, and with a sick heart he understood. "Yes, that is true. For I have not retained the faith nor the desire nor the vision. Yes, that is very true, worse luck. . . . Meanwhile I can assure you I admired each of the ladies very unfeignedly, and was greatly flattered by their kind offers. More than generous, I thought them. But it really would not do for me to take up with any one of them now. For Lisa is my wife, you see. A great deal has passed between us—and I have been a great disappointment to her, in many ways—and I am used to her—" Then Jurgen considered, and regarded the black gentleman with mingled envy and commiseration. "Why, no, you probably would not understand, sir, because I suppose there is no marrying or giving in marriage here, either. But I can assure you it is always pretty much like that."

"I lack grounds to dispute your aphorism," observed Koshchei, "inasmuch as matrimony was not included in my doom. None the less, to a bystander, the conduct of both of you appears remarkable."

"The truth of it, sir, is a great symbol," said Jurgen, with a splurge of confidence, "in that my wife is rather foolishly fond of me. Oh, I grant you, it is the fashion of women to discard civility toward those for whom they suffer most willingly: and whom a woman loveth she chasteneth, after a good precedent. . . . For, Prince, they

are all poets; but the medium they work in is not always ink. So the moment that Lisa is set free from what, in a manner of speaking, sir, inconsiderate persons might, in their unthinking way, refer to as the terrors of a place that I do not for an instant doubt to be conducted after a system which furthers the true interests of everybody, and so reflects vast credit upon its officials, if you will pardon my frankness, sir"—and Jurgen smiled ingratiatingly—"why, at that moment Lisa's thoughts take form in very much the high denunciatory vein of Jeremiah and Amos, who were remarkably fine poets: and her next essay in creative composition is my supper. Tomorrow she will darn and sew me an epic. Such, sir, are Lisa's poems, all addressed to me, who came so near to gallivanting with mere queens! Oh, Prince, when I consider steadfastly the depth and the intensity of that devotion which, for so many years, has tended me, and has endured the society of that person whom I peculiarly know to be the most tedious and irritating of companions, I stand aghast, before a miracle. And I cry, *Oh, certainly a goddess!* Hah, all we poets write a deal about love: but none of us may grasp the word's full meaning until he reflects that this is a passion mighty enough to induce a woman to put up with him. And the crowning touch is that Lisa is jealous. Think upon that, now!" And Jurgen chuckled. "Yet still you probably would not understand, sir, because I suppose there is no marrying or giving in marriage, here either. No less, the truth of it is a great symbol."

Then Jurgen sighed, and shook hands with Koshchei, very circumspectly, and went home to his wife. And he found her quite unaltered. Thus it was in the old days.



TEARS

By John Hamilton

THE variegated wails of the numerous infants in your apartment-house.

The lachrymose lament of your bibulous friend who discovers that you have two heads instead of three.

Anyone's tears sans handkerchief.

The impish yowl of the pretty lady's small boy who wants to try on your spats in the crowded street-car.

Female tears that substitute male damns.

The pretty tale of Niobe's tears as compared with your wife's unmelodious snifle.

The dainty tears of the beautiful girl who binds up your finger upon which you slyly splashed some red ink.

The Klaxon grief of the corpulent cook when she steps on the cat.

The stigmatized sobs at the funeral

of the forgotten relative who has left everyone present ten thousand dollars.

Tears that the vaudeville tenor employs when he sings "The Long, Long Trail."

Sob sisters and the Salvation Army.

The tears of a beautiful woman that remind you of limpid pearls.

The tears of the same woman ten years later that remind you of the shapeless drops that ooze out of a leaking hot-water bottle.

The plaintive whine of a baby next to you in the theater whom you have concluded summarily to strangle just as the usher puts in his appearance.

The skilled sobbing of the fascinating widow who can weep without getting her nose red.

The blubbing of your wife who cannot.



THE STRONG AND THE WEAK

By Dennison Varr

NIGHT strode in with his sable breath and killed all the motes of day. Soon the gay colors and gaudy hues which had been Nature's homage to the Spirit of Day dulled and weakened, and vanished under a somber film. Nature had bowed to the conqueror. Not so the works of Man. The dim gas lamps beat feebly with their flickering rays against the all-enveloping blackness. At times their yellow shafts even pierced it momentarily. But gradually their struggles ceased under the spell of impotency, until with a dying gasp the last of them blew out. The odds against them were too great. There was a strike at the gas works.

THE AVENGING YEARS

By John C. Cavendish

I.

I SAW a real antique in his mouldy basement shop—a copy of a Koran translated into French by the Sieur de Ryer, and printed over two hundred years ago—and I went down to purchase it. In this way I made his acquaintance. At first he talked to me standing up among his disorderly books, with sometimes a smudge of ancient dust across his face, like a streak of sable war-paint. Later, because I listened to him silently and well, he took me back of the books and gave me a chair at a dirty little table. There we sat, in a perpetual twilight like that of a dying world, and he poured into my ears the opinions he most cherished, and at last one day he began the strange and fervid story of his life.

He was very old; he was shrunken like withered fruit. Each day he must have consumed prodigious quantities of tea, for he never talked without the accompaniment of a freshly brewed pot, brought into us steaming, the aromatic vapors drifting from the spout like the smoke of incense from a censer.

The beverage was served to us by an incredibly old woman, monstrous in the crooked deformity into which the years had shaped her. Her face was lined with sardonic furrows; it was an evil countenance with an effect of malevolence heightened by her physical impotence. Yet when the old man spoke to her she trembled and fear came over the evil of her face, like an obliterating shadow. He was strikingly harsh to her; when he commanded her his voice rose in pitch until, although

his utterance was never really loud, he seemed to scream. She at no time remained with us save during the seconds when some service was required of her, after which she disappeared through a low door into the uncertain gloom of a room beyond, like a troll-woman seeking her cave.

I knew the old man many months before he began to tell me the passionate history of his earlier years. He never made of this a connected story, but related his tale day by day in colourful patches, leaving their synthesis to me. Now and then he would get up and disappear around the dim shelves to attend a customer. Then I would hear his uneven step as he came back and see him re-appear among his books; the incongruous story would be resumed—incongruous because it was a tale of emotion, the warm blood of young years spoken from the bleached lips of an ancient dealer in antiques.

II.

UNTIL his father died, and Bradley was then twenty-seven years old, he was entirely dominated by his parent. In his nature there was something unresistant and Bradley, senior, never really aware of his son's temperament, forced him into uncongenial pursuits.

Young Bradley was engaged in business until nearly thirty. His father considered him a boy of very mediocre talents; so far as this judgment applied to his commercial ability, it was true. When old Bradley died his son never appeared another day at the office.

For years he had cherished an affection for books, for paintings and for

the atmosphere in which these things were produced. He had indulged many vague dreams of a life in quarters of lax convention, with an acquaintance among charming and temperamental people. He knew no such people and his notion of their way of living was a blend of truth and inaccuracy achieved by his credence of gossip, his reading and his imagination. Now, with his freedom, he sought to enter into such a life.

He chose two rooms in an old house, one of those tall old houses that, with the neighborhoods in which they stand, have passed from the usage of polite people to the harbouring of eccentrics. Bradley lived on the third floor at the back, and in front, at the end of the corridor, two other rooms were occupied by an artist and a young girl.

He saw her first down the length of the hall, standing in the open door. She was posed in profile and her lips moved as she spoke to the man in the room. A window that gave her a background touched the edges of her person with light. Otherwise, she was largely in shadow; her effect was that of a silhouette rimmed with white, even flame. She leaned a little forward, her aspect appeared, for the moment, curiously two dimensional.

Bradley made a sound in the hall and she turned her head quickly. She saw him and with a swift movement closed the door of her room. Bradley walked to the stairs and descended in semi-darkness.

He had found in the figure of her, posed a second in the doorway, that subtle suggestion of unconventionality so agreeable to him. He desired to know her. That wish was not difficult to gratify, for he made the acquaintance of the artist a few days later and was invited to his room. He learned also that to the artist the girl stood in the relation of daughter.

One evening he knocked on the door at the end of the hall and a voice told him to come in. This he did, and found three people in the room. The artist, a big blond chap, was stretched out in

a large chair drawn close to a very disorderly table. Near him sat a woman, blonde also, quite plump, with somewhat startling brown eyes. The girl in whom Bradley found his interest was curled like an ungraceful cat in a chair on the other side of the room. The artist got up and shook Bradley's hand.

"Glad you came in," he said. "Sit down anywhere." He inclined his head toward the blonde woman.

"Know Miss Justin," he said.

"Hello," said Miss Justin and she waved her hand to him, but did not move.

"And this is Geraldine," concluded his host, pointing to his daughter.

Bradley bowed; Geraldine made no acknowledgment.

The artist went back to his chair, and the blonde woman resumed a gossiping conversation with him that she had evidently broken off on Bradley's knock. Bradley, a little disconcerted, stood near the door for an uncertain moment and then, under the stress of his desire, crossed the room to the girl curled up on a chair. He pulled another chair near her and sat down.

"I want to talk to you," he said. "May I?"

"Of course you may," she said.

He made his first, intimate scrutiny of her. Her clothes were untidy and here and there spotted; they were, it seemed to him, almost purposely and aggressively without neatness. Her hair was black and heaped up on her head carelessly, as if tossed there. Bradley looked at her face and he saw first her full, blue eyes, cold, and beautiful he thought. Her nose was large, aggressive, somewhat curved, and the nostrils thin and nervous. She had a full-lipped mouth, a little sullen in repose.

"I came in here to see you," Bradley told her.

She showed no surprise; she frowned a little.

"I know you did. I felt that. Why? I'm not a pleasant person nor an interesting person, and I'm not particularly struck with you."

"You're terribly frank!"

"Why shouldn't I be?"

It would have been a difficult question for Bradley to answer; his conversation with Geraldine seemed to have come to a stalemate, but he was rescued from any embarrassment by the artist, who hurled a query at him across the room.

"I say, Bradley," he called. "What do you think about this?"

He pointed to plump Miss Justin, who was smiling a little fatuously.

"Ruth here is a great reformer; she has a lot of hopeful ideas about the uplift of the common man. What do you think?"

"Well . . . just what do you mean?"

"I think," said the artist, "that the uplift only discourages the extraordinary man and makes the sum total of the forces of mediocrity too strong for him. It doesn't elevate the common man—it simply destroys the super-man."

"Perhaps—"

Bradley was drawn into the discussion.

Geraldine took no part in it and when Bradley turned to her again she was resting her face in her hands, staring moodily at the floor, with something ferine in her tousled appearance, so that he thought she suggested a morose goddess, fallen from her Pegana.

"And what do you think?" he asked her.

"I don't think anything about it," she said. "Dad likes to talk and he takes up some silly thing *she* says and treats it seriously—as if she really had a thought!"

Angrily she looked at him with her blue, clear eyes. Her emotions were exhibited with the naivette of a child; to Bradley her frankness was strongly attractive; she glossed none of her inner feelings with a conventional veneer. He considered her mysterious. His sense of a mystery in her gave her a potent charm; her frankness became a veil of concealment; he was eager to understand her. He watched her face and thought her beautiful.

III

In the course of the next few weeks Bradley learned considerably about the artist and his daughter Geraldine. That relationship appeared to be authentic. But Geraldine's mother was unmentioned; Geraldine had never known anything about her.

During this period, in the half dozen times Bradley dropped into the room at the end of the hall, he usually saw the Justin woman. He was not then sure of her status. She seemed to him a rather colourlessly good-humoured woman with a certain physical charm achieved by her voluptuous contours. Geraldine's father treated her with a half-humorous, half-tender deference. But Geraldine exhibited a scorn softened by no effort at concealment.

The reason of her dislike was not quite clear to Bradley until the day when he found her there alone, in passionate tears.

He had invited her out to dinner with him. Before the appointed time he was dressed and waiting impatiently. With the nervousness of an amateur performer waiting for his entrance-cue, he walked up and down the room, glancing now and again into his mirror. He wondered what they might talk about, how Geraldine would deport herself, whether she would maintain the bitter demeanour he had always found her characteristic. He glanced at his watch and saw that it was time to call. Opening the door, he stepped out into the corridor.

He walked to her door and tapped. He heard a movement in the room, but no voice called out to him. He knocked again.

"Come!"

It was her voice.

He went in. She was standing with her back to the window. He had expected to see her dressed to go out, but she was in *negligée*. The latter hung limply from her shoulders like a cément, and looking at her face he was amazed to find her eyes red. Her hair was unspeakably tousled as if she had

been running her fingers through it persistently, and downward from her eyes ran red lines, like welts from a cat-o'-nine-tails, the seared courses of tears.

"I can't go!" she said.

Bradley was astonished. He stood in front of her stupidly, unable to say anything.

"I tell you I can't go out!" she repeated.

"But what is the matter?" he faltered at last.

She remained motionless a moment, looking at him in the frozen manner with which she had first greeted him. Her face was almost without expression, and pale, save for the red marks burned there by her tears.

"My father has gone again," she said.

"What?"

Bradley was too surprised to be inattentive.

She explained in a cold voice, curiously repressed, that by the incongruity of its icy impersonality brought out startlingly the tragic import of the words she spoke.

"My father has gone again. You don't understand, do you? He goes, from time to time, and leaves me. This time it's with that woman you've seen here—the Justin woman. I don't know where he's gone and I won't know until he's ready to come back. Then he'll search for me again."

She stopped speaking; her eyes remained on Bradley's face.

"But . . . but what are you going to do?"

"Do! What have I done before? Anything I can get to do! You don't suppose he leaves me any money, do you?"

She stared at Bradley a moment longer and he returned her stare. His mind seemed quite incapable of any adequate thought. He was silent. Geraldine was silent; neither moved. He had a curious sensation of enchantment; it seemed to him that he and Geraldine would ceaselessly maintain this tableau, an unrelieved nightmare. His surprise had, in a sense, drugged his mind.

Geraldine had willed the utmost repression of her emotions. Her frigid posturing was accomplished at the expenditure of an immense mental effort. But she felt her first fury, the flaming, extravagant anger she had gripped and controlled on Bradley's approach, seething in her blood. She struggled a moment; she still stared at Bradley with a face from which all expression had been frozen. And then, like hot collected vapours capable of no further repression, she exploded.

Bradley was enchained in the stupefaction of his first surprise. He was wholly unprepared for her demonstration. In the first moments of her extravagance he was without motion.

She made a grimace. Like an enraged cat she whirled half a circle, noiselessly. She was standing close to the table at which her father customarily sat. A half a dozen of his sketches were scattered over its top. These chromatic daubs stuck here and there among a vast disorder of papers, books, odds and ends of clothing. The table was covered by a kid pelt.

She seized one of the corners and pulled the skin from the varnished top. A swirl of paper and books cascaded to the floor like a suddenly loosed chaos. With a distorted countenance, she scattered them with her feet, she trampled on them, she beat and ripped them with her slippers, like a furious deity treading out sin. In the midst of her destructive rage her eyes were captured by an object at the other side of the room. It was an easel on which rested a half-finished portrait.

She ran across the room precipitously, almost seemed to achieve the movement from one place to the other in a single infuriated step. She thrust her fists at the canvas; it resisted her blows. She turned, seized a slender straight-backed chair and hurled it at the picture. The canvas was pierced, the whole apparatus fell to the floor with an explosive clatter, and Geraldine sank down into the ruins in an hysteria of weeping.

A singular thrill had come upon Bradley. The exuberant rage to which he had been witness stirred him, moved him intensely, produced in him a sense of exultation. An admiration for the passion of the girl on the floor glowed in his heart. He looked down and saw the tense vitality of her convulsive shoulders. She was desirable!

He crossed over to her, leaned down to her, put his hands on her arms.

"Don't!" he said.

She seemed not to hear him. He spoke to her again.

"What do you care where he's gone? I'm in love with you. I've been in love with you ever since I first saw you. Don't you hear me? I'm in love with you, Geraldine. I want you to marry me!"

She stopped weeping suddenly and turned her face to him. Once more it was masked with an icy repression. The flush of her fury had dropped into pallor. On the white of her face the marks of her tears stained the skin with carmine splotches.

"What . . . what do you mean?" she asked.

"Don't you understand?" Bradley repeated. "I want you to marry me. I want you for my wife. I'm in love with you."

She stood up; she still looked at him; she seemed to search his face. Bradley was very close to her, repressing an urge to seize her and cover her face with kisses.

"I don't love you," she said slowly.

"I don't care!" he cried. "You will. I want you to marry me!"

"I'd never love you," she said. "Even if I did marry you. You don't want me!"

He could no longer restrain himself and he took her in his arms and kissed her damp face. It was in him now that the fury of passion burned; the girl in his arms was flexed, almost without life, pale, unresisting, as if the touch of his lips were a narcotic that brought a stupor to her limbs.

"You must marry me! You must!" he cried.

IV

SHE married Bradley and in his senses the fascination of her increased. For many weeks he dreamed of arousing her to a love for him. In the night, lying awake, he pictured a hundred moments of mutual ardour, invented dialogue, created whole scents of the future. Yet she still received his kisses without response, coldly, as if numbed by his arms.

On their wedding trip they went to Florida. Later they crossed the keys and steamed to Havana. Sometimes, at strange sights, or the beauty of an ancient place, Geraldine's eyes widened, colour glowed in her cheeks, and her voice acquired a fervour. But never for Bradley.

At best she was indifferent to him. At worst she was antagonistic. Sometimes she was sullen, mute, unapproachable. Yet from her there passed to Bradley a subtle and insidious attraction, that made all of her moods a fascination.

His desire for response caused him an eagerness even for her anger. Then she was at least aroused emotionally, if not in the way he desired. Sometimes, in the midst of her anger, he would seize her and kiss her, and the faint perfume of her white skin maddened him.

They returned to New York and took an apartment. Geraldine was amused for a time by the collection of rugs, pictures, vases, pieces of tapestry, silk screens for their rooms, and Bradley, the serf of her allure, made her no denials. He visited all the theaters with her, all the cafés; she at last grew tired of these things.

She suggested a return to Bohemian quarters, and Bradley acquiesced.

"I want to see some of the old people again," she said. He consented and they stored some of their things, took others with them, and moved to a suite in the old studio quarter.

Geraldine planned a big party; it seemed she had more acquaintances than Bradley imagined. They deco-

rated the rooms in a bizarre scheme of black and white and Geraldine displayed almost a childish fervour in all the arrangements, in hiring of the musicians, the caterer, the selection of refreshments. Somewhat alarmed, Bradley paid the bills.

The night came and the guests arrived in costume. Their revelry was extravagant, and Bradley felt a little out of place. He had scarcely a moment with his wife all evening. She was captured by a tall, smiling fellow, with an almost Spanish cast of face, with whom she danced repeatedly. Bradley was finally introduced to him formally. His name was Crae. He was a composer of music.

This initiated a curious intimacy with which Bradley felt himself unable to cope. Crae called on Geraldine, they dined out together, they seemed quite oblivious of Bradley. Their relation was assumed with so much *naïveté* that he scarcely knew how to take hold of it. He wanted to expostulate, yet every method that occurred to him seemed clumsy. He was afraid of Geraldine's scorn.

So Bradley let things drift until one morning he found a note: Geraldine had gone.

At first he was stupefied. For several days he was unable to act, but remained in his rooms, mute, stunned, overwhelmed, as if he had been drugged. Then a spark of anger lighted in his stupefaction. A flame kindled and leapt up bright and Bradley burned with a resolve to seek out Geraldine and the composer of music who had taken her from him. He spent a day in angry resolves, in passionate visions of retribution, and thought of no plan. Later, considering everything, trying to discover a channel for personal action, he was finally forced to put his search in the hands of a detective agency. His hours passed in waiting.

The sleuths procured him no information and served no function save to collect charges; Bradley transferred the inquiry to another agency. Blessed

with an astonishing inspiration, this second agency communicated with the composer's publishers and found that he had written them only a few days before, giving an address. This was still New York. The detectives went to the place he had named and found him with Geraldine. Over a month had passed since they had disappeared together. They had been in New York the entire time.

Bradley settled with his detective agency. He went to a pawn shop and bought a revolver and cartridges to fit it. He seemed now to act mechanically, to think no more, to follow only the dictates of an unseen genius, whispering to his brain.

The next morning he set out for the house where Geraldine was living with Crae.

Curiously numb, he mounted the steps and rang the bell. A maid came to the door.

"Is Mr. Crae home?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Is his . . . his wife?"

"I don't think she can see you now, sir. She's busy."

Bradley looked at the girl a moment. He had no plan ready for such an obstacle. She waited a second; he did not speak; she was about to close the door. With a growl like an animal, Bradley put his foot over the threshold. He pushed the girl aside, like a man brushing a spider's thread from his face. He ran into the hall and almost instinctively he climbed the stairs. When he was nearly to the top a woman stepped out of one of the rooms. It was Geraldine.

Her black hair was caught up loosely. She wore a peignoir of red silk, broidered over with gold flowers, and a strand of her hair touched the stuff at her shoulder with the effect of a sable trimming. She stared at Bradley a moment and walked back into the room. He swiftly followed her. She was waiting at the door; as he entered she closed it.

Bradley surveyed the room in a swift glance. It was strewn with clothing.

Near the window was a trunk, half packed. There was no sign of Crae.

"Where is he?" demanded Bradley.

"He's gone. . . ."

Geraldine answered him after a perceptible pause, as if she weighed whether or not she would speak. Her face was impersonal, emotionless, yet somehow potentially fervent, like a tragic mask with the lines of tragedy painted out.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean he's gone. Our money ran out; he had no more; he's gone."

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know. I haven't thought of anything."

No word to him of extenuation, of excuse, of explanation, but only a *naïveté*, or an indifference, that was almost dreadful! Bradley stared at her. She met his gaze with her blue eyes opened, her lips a little parted, her face pale, with just a glow of red over it reflected from the carmine peignoir.

And the spell of her returned to Bradley. He forgot his design of retribution, whatever it might have been. His senses thrilled to her nearness, like a string vibrant by sympathy. He stood before her only a moment longer and then, forgetful of all that was not of her supreme allure, he circled her with his arms and felt her midnight hair fall over his hands like a shower of strong silk and he touched her lips again until the warmth of them destroyed all the chill that yet remained in his spirit. The faint perfume of her was again in his nostrils.

She received his lips, she made him no resistance—nor any response. He drew away a second and looked at her pale face, still faintly red by the colour thrown up from her dress. A flash of understanding, a moment of vision came to him. She was mysterious to him, she was infinitely desirable—and she would never love him! Yet, he saw himself, months and years in prospect, the slave of her allure, the sub-

ject of her caprice and cruelty, until at last the loss of that which he found beautiful in her would free him from her ineffable charm!

V

As I have said, the old man never told me a connected story. All that I have related is given by a synthesis of my own making. He was a poor storyteller. He diluted his interest with irrelevancies, he backed and filled, he made omissions. But nevertheless he contrived to get a fervour into his snatches of self-history and often his dried-up face expanded under my eyes until I saw the young man he had been, and his fervid love affair became authentic.

But at last he ceased to tell me of this, and the tale seemed quite incomplete to me. Several times I sat with him, drinking tea that exhaled a fresh aroma into the musty odours of his books, and waited for the end of his story. But it never came. At last I questioned him.

"But your wife—the woman . . . Geraldine? What happened to her?"

He looked at me a little surprised.

"Nothing," he said.

"But—"

He gazed at me a second and then elevated his brows like Punch.

"Ha!" he exclaimed. "I thought you understood. You never connected—"

He paused, looked into his tea-cup and found it empty.

"Geraldine!" he bawled, with senile fury, for the first time using that name while I had been with him in that place. The witch came out of her cave; I looked at her; I understood.

The old man snarled at her and she went away with his cup.

I arose and shook his hand good-bye. The sense of pity in which I had held him was quite gone.

The years, that crumble beauty, had avenged him.

THIS PAST WINTER

By George B. Jenkins, Jr.

THE disappointments of this past winter— Ah, me! Pauline has married, and no longer telephones me after midnight. . . . Annabelle eloped with an utter stranger, and I have no one now to accompany me to Long Beach. . . . Ethel returned all my letters and sent her brother around to see me because I did not return hers with sufficient quickness. . . . Bernice won her suit for breach of promise and is spending the summer in Atlantic City. . . . Emily demanded an increase in her alimony and a sympathetic judge doubled her allowance. . . . Hortense neglected to return the engagement ring I gave her, and has since added to her collection. . . . Fanny threatened me until I gave her husband a position, and I can't fire him. . . . And Lucille . . . Lucille married me!

The disappointments of this past winter— Ah, me!



SEPULTURE

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

I HAVE taken my thought of you
And hallowed it in far
Cool crypts of memory where the dead
Of all light lovers are.

I have buried my thought of you—
Your lips, your hands, your hair;
Each dear, inconsequent grace, each word
That made my heart aware.

I have hidden my thought of you . . .
But what if I should see
A ghost return to haunt your eyes—
What of your thought of me!



ONE SON OF ADAM

By Phil Lang and Robert P. Janette

MR. VAN DUSEN laid his pen in its accustomed place on the inkstand, carefully blotted the work of the last moment, and took off the telephone receiver.

"Yes, Van Dusen speaking."

His tone was perhaps a little more rasping than in former years; otherwise his response to the call for the head bookkeeper had not varied in two decades. Innovations were as foreign to Henry Van Dusen as tobacco and strong drink.

He had expected a curt command from the boss, or a customer's inquiry relative to an account. Therefore his scanty gray eyebrows rose in surprise at the voice of Gid Fellows—or rather he who had been Gid Fellows until thirty years' practice in the village transformed him into Doctor Gideon Fellows.

"Your wife has met with a little accident, Henry. Had a fall. Better run out on the two-eight. I'll wait." Then came a provoking click. Either the doctor had hung up or central had cut him off. Henry, still holding the receiver, snapped open his watch. He would just have time to reach Grand Central Station if he took the subway at once.

The watch he disposed of automatically; the receiver, however, seemed to puzzle him—to put it in his pencil pocket—to lay it on the desk?—ah yes, bless me, hang it on the hook! This done, he unwound his legs from the stool and rubberheeled to the locker, where he took out his last year's straw hat and changed his coat, meanwhile instructing the junior clerk to explain his unprecedented departure.

It was not until he reached his seat in the coach that he began to analyze the message which was taking him home before the 5:58 on a Wednesday. But before the train was well under way he had reviewed every possible calamity which could have overtaken Mrs. Van Dusen.

Now as he sped along he again went over the dire conjectures. Where had she fallen? Undoubtedly on the steps or stairs. The front steps? No, not likely. There was no ice this time of year. The stairs, then. Well, perhaps. It did not seem probable, though. Hadn't she been climbing them all these years without mishap? And particularly good stairs they were, too—six-inch riser, nine-inch tread, selected maple. Had he not supervised their installation, and all other details when building the Van Dusen home at Greensward Heights?

Of course, one with high heels might make a misstep on the best of stairs—but Mrs. Van Dusen didn't wear high heels. In fact she frequently had spoken unflatteringly of women who do—*one woman* in particular—and Henry Van Dusen fidgeted as he recalled the occasions.

Then there was the other flight of stairs—those to the attic—narrow, dark and seldom ascended. But why should his wife go to the attic? When anything up there was needed, hadn't she always dispatched him? Well, maybe in this instance there had been urgent need of the object. Maybe—

Henry's face grew graver still, and taking off his nose glasses he mopped his head. That old distressing feeling, half shudder, half chill, suddenly per-

vaded body and soul—the feeling that heretofore had come upon him only when his wife mentioned “that woman with the high heels.” She had seen the woman only once, but that had been sufficient for her to inventory and appraise, to her own satisfaction, if not to Henry’s.

No, it was unnecessary to make further speculations. He knew now that there could be but one reason for Mrs. Van Dusen’s visit to the attic. *She had gone after the letter!*

He had missed his train the evening before. That trial balance, plague take it, had been to blame. And his explanation at home had been unconvincing. There had been no words—just cool reticence on the part of his wife.

The letter! Yes, that was it. And with the conviction, there appeared before his eyes a vista leading back into the past, illuminated by the light of understanding. The attic, after all, was the place where she had kept the letter for these many years, except, of course, on those memorable occasions when she had mysteriously produced it from some recess in her dress. True, she had rarely unearthed it during the past fifteen years, but at those times, Henry ruefully recalled, the appearance of the letter accomplished its grim purpose. He could picture her, defiant but unagitated, as she tapped the opened envelope on her thumb, and he could see himself yielding earlier in each succeeding domestic combat.

Yes, at the bottom of it all was the letter. Apparently, years ago she had feared that, despite her cunning, Henry would stumble upon it in his never ceasing, though never obvious, search; and she had found some dark but easily accessible sarcophagus in the attic, from which the epistle—that damning specter of his past—could be resurrected at will. It was all very plain now. That was why she had insisted upon supervising the area beneath the eaves. In person she had looked after the rearrangement of trunks, boxes and whatnot up above when the time came

for spring housecleaning. He even recalled the mild argument which took place when she recommended burning up some of the old newspapers that he had filed up there on the floor.

“You have so much to do, Henry,” she had said. “Surely I can take the attic off your hands!”

And he had given in, little dreaming that her suggestion cloaked a sinister purpose.

Now he could see that she had sent him up for this and that little thing merely to disarm lingering suspicion—to banish any consideration he might have been giving to the attic. And there the letter had reposed, under his very nose, no doubt. What reliance she must have put in the security of the hiding place!

At that, he had not ignored the attic in his periodical, stealthful searches. Indeed, he recalled vividly his exploration of the dusty region above, and he chafed now as he thought how he had been misled by reading “The Purloined Letter.” According to Poe, an efficient, but sometimes blundering, policeman divided into geometrical units the quarters to be searched, and minutely examined each in turn. When Henry read this, quite by chance, the suggestion seemed sent from Heaven, and he had acted upon it apace. It was but natural, therefore, that the process eventually should lead him to the attic. But Henry’s emulation of the astute investigator had not stopped at copying the efficiency—it also included the blundering.

The momentous but unfruitful day all came back to him now. Mrs. Van Dusen had taken an early train to attend her sister’s funeral in a neighboring town. The boss had let him off to go to the family obsequies. Ah, thoughtful man that he had been! Had he not embraced this opportunity, and rummaged with unhurried thoroughness through the Van Dusen domicile, literally from cellar to garret?

Again the uncanny tremor ran through him, as his mind began to conjure up what might have happened had

his wife found out about that surreptitious search. How fortunate that he had not left some little trace! And suppose she had discovered his greater crime—an absence from the office unaccounted for! . . . Measuring by the past, his trial would have made The Inquisition look like a meeting of the Board of Elders. How futile explanations would have been! Ah, yes, how futile—in view of his failure to make the first truancy appear inconsequential. Would he ever forget that first absence, and the collapse of his defense, which doomed him to the constant and consistent surveillance of Mrs. Van Dusen for twenty-odd years?

On that terrible evening when his wife declined to accept his faltering rebutter, and said: "I have been blind, but now my eyes are open," he had thought that no greater tribulation could visit him. Confident fool, to hold the future so lightly! Had not the real calamity been reserved for the very next night? Then it was that he first saw the letter. And thenceforth he had been committed to "lock-step-and-lights-out" domesticity.

Each poignant detail came back. How Mrs. Van Dusen had played with him! Her strained silence at dinner had bespoken impending ill as significantly as if "Beware" had been written in letters of red upon the spotless tablecloth.

The girl had removed the dessert things. Custard had been the sweet, and forever after custard, in cup, in pie or concealed beneath whipped cream, had given Henry a chill like unto that of an open window in winter. The girl's final exit to the kitchen had whisked away the proverbial straw, and immediately the anchorage of silence and inactivity was lifted. Forthwith Mrs. Van Dusen drew an envelope from her gown and scanning it a moment said:

"Henry, a letter came for you today—from that woman. I recognized the monogram, and opened it!"

He recalled how he had reached for it with a forced smile of indifference.

"No, Henry, I shall keep it." The words rang in his ears. "Its contents cannot interest you—not if your vows mean anything. I may wish to refer to it, should I ever doubt you."

Thereafter, under the spell of the letter, Henry had grown to mould his life so that hours, and even minutes, away from her could be accounted for on call.

For weeks there would be no hint of the letter's existence. Then his unfortunate summons to the boss's office at quitting time, or some other trivial incident, would cause the 5:58 to arrive at Greensward Heights without him. His hurried entrance, after coming in on the 6:37, or as once happened, on the 7:05, would be halted abruptly by the look on his wife's face, and his explanation shifted to a foolish commonplace about the weather, as he felt the presence of that haunting letter.

Then when they were seated at the table, Mrs. Van Dusen would inaugurate the melancholy meal with her salutatory, customary on such occasions. But it would not be rendered vocally, as salutations are wont to be given. No, this one consisted of eloquent reserve, and ominous glances that traveled everywhere but in Henry's direction. And the dinner thus sauced with silence would proceed dismally, until Henry, breaking under the strain, remarked: "The boss forgets that employees have regular hours to eat."

After this bit of discourse, usually incoherent, Henry would reach for a roll that he did not want especially, but his eyes could follow the outstretched hand, and perhaps see if the letter lurked about. Should it be visible, Henry's hand, suddenly palsied, would return without the roll. When the letter could not be seen, Henry more than likely would take the roll and butter it, regardless of the one on his plate, amply spread. His speech then would become normal, as he added details to his arraignment of the boss. . . .

At this point Henry's reminiscences took a new trend, for the train had stopped at Englewild, the home of a

former friend, Elbert Perkins. Perkins, the asinine jester—Perkins, the positively dangerous fool, had once been a dinner guest at the Van Dusen home, and in a tragic effort to be jocular had remarked: "Well, Henry, how do you like the new stenog. that left us to go to your office? Some baby, eh? Hope Mrs. Van Dusen doesn't mind your taking her out to lunch once in a while."

Although this had happened ten years ago, and incidentally marked Perkins' last visit to their home, Henry never had been able to pass through Englewild without thinking of one resident there who should have been hung in early youth.

Today the malignant thoughts incited by Englewild remained longer than usual. In fact it was the familiar cross-streets outskirting Greensward Heights that finally banished them.

Before the train came to a full stop, Henry alighted—a dangerous proceeding, and unexampled, but warranted by the extremity of the occasion. He set off briskly and turned into his street with unslackened speed.

As he went up the walk to his house he saw that the front door was open, the screen door closed. The tenth would soon be here—the date for removing and storing screens, he reflected, as he turned the latch. Luckily the tenth fell on Saturday this year. Therefore this would not be an early morning or late evening chore—he could do it in the afternoon.

The closing of the door behind him brought a slight rustle at the head of the stairs, and two faces peered over the balustrade at the landing—Mrs. Trainor and Mrs. Wilkes, he observed—neighbors of almost like distance on either side of his house. Apparently the women had made up their quarrel—one of long standing, as he remembered it. Heretofore Mrs. Trainor had visited them only when assured that Mrs. Wilkes was occupied elsewhere, and Mrs. Wilkes had followed the same custom. "Neighbors should

be neighborly," was the thought that had come to Henry when he learned how resourcefully the two avoided contact in neutral territory. It was pleasant now to think that they had been brought together in his home.

At that moment there came a step at the top of the stairs, and Henry, ascending, again looked up their shiny length. Doctor Fellows—"Old Gid"—was coming down with faltering tread. Old Gid was getting along now, and had to feel his way, no doubt. Henry held out his hand.

"How are you, Gid? Glad to see you."

The doctor took the hand and held it in both of his.

"Henry," he said, "I hope you'll always be glad to see me—to see your Old Gid, but—" He cleared his throat and dropped his head. "But, Henry, old man, as your doctor—as your friend—I've got to tell you something that—comes harder than anything I ever said."

Henry clutched the doctor's arm.

"Is it so bad?" he whispered.

The doctor nodded.

"Emily—she—oh, God, Henry, I just can't—"

The tears that came from the kind old eyes and fell upon Henry's hand as he withdrew it completed the message.

"In her room, Henry. The women helped me. They'll stay and do what's to be done. I—I couldn't do any more."

Henry grasped the rail, and pulled up his numb and heavy limbs, step by step. When he got to the landing, the two women came to him, paused for a moment, and passed on down without a word.

At last he reached the door of the room that had been theirs. He halted at the threshold. Even the long minutes coming up the stairs had not prepared him for what might lie beyond. His eyes descended and rested on the little strip of maple, nicely laid, nicely beveled, as thresholds of careful carpentry should be. It was but a fleeting thought, for the Henry Van Dusen of

the moment just passed seemed to turn back and disappear, while the Henry of now summoned fortitude and looked into the dimly lighted room, with all its familiar things in shadow.

He knew, without going in, what his bereavement would mean. His love had not been merely a passionate incident of youth. It had not been a passing emotion, succeeded by drudgery and forbearance. Nor had he at any time held it lightly, as year followed year. Indeed, it had been so much a part of him through the springtime and summer of their union that the weeds of doubt and accusation which sprang up in later years could not stay its growth. Now, came the irreconcilable realization that his loss was not all of the future—that the periods of discord, not of his making, had caused him to suppress those little acts and words of affection which were his very life.

The still calm of the room came out to him as he stood there, but the consciousness of a presence, known yet strange, held him back. Despite the early hour, the shadows within seemed to grow darker. His watch ticked loudly in his pocket.

At length he looked up and crossed the threshold. His soft steps carried him to her sewing-table. He steadied himself for a moment, and lightly passed his hand over her work-basket.

The feeling of an unfamiliar presence left him, and as he crept along the side of the bed his foot touched something soft—cloth of some sort evidently. He bent down and lifted it. Her apron! Something fell from the folds or from the pocket. An envelope, he could see in the dim light. He picked it up, and felt the border of tape which she had used to preserve it. The letter! At last it was in his hands! But how little that mattered now!

He knelt at her side, and tearing out the sheet of note paper, held it across

the bed, into the ray of light that stole in beneath the curtain. There were but four lines. . . .

The letter fluttered from his hand. His face sank into the counterpane.

"And you thought *that*, Emily," he sobbed. "All these years, you thought *that*."

II

It seemed to Henry that the boss had become less harsh. In time the little compliments on his accuracy brought a thrill he had not known before. But there came an afternoon when he realized the emptiness of all the new kindnesses and considerations.

With an invoice to be approved, he had gone to the private office, but paused suddenly at the door on hearing conversation within.

"I tell you, dearie, a man don't know how lucky he is to have a real wife," the boss was saying. "Remember me telling you about old Henry Van Dusen, who lost his wife a few weeks ago? Well, old henpecked Hen, as the boys here call him, is back on the job again, and the first time I ever saw him smile was today—just working along, smiling to himself. Suppose he's got another picked out already!"

Henry drew back and returned to his desk to await the departure of the boss's wife. He wished he hadn't heard. But he couldn't help standing there for a minute when his name was mentioned.

The visitor lingered, and Henry's thoughts wandered from the business at hand. He leaned on the high desk and resting his chin in his palm, looked out at the sun setting over the river. And as he stood there, the deep lines in his cheeks softened, and a smile came to his lips.

"You know now," he murmured. "You know now, don't you, Emily?"



QUALITY

By Mary Cullen

I

DOROTHY STUYVESANT LATTEBURY, blushing delicately, in filmy wedding gown, came daintily up the aisle, her gossamer veil floating like mist about her head.

At the altar she stubbed her toe on a potted lily.

Said she to the minister: "That's a hell of a place for a lily!"

II

MARY O'GRADY had not eaten for three days.

A man of blatant attire, gleaming finger-nails and considerable clinking coin smiled at her.

She did not glance in his direction because a little child was watching her with wide solemn eyes.



THE LAST FAY

By Harold Cook

I AM the last fairy that Merlin made out of wisps o' the wind,

I was clad with a cloak of morning mists, with the dawn I was glad,
I danced for men in the moonlight and when in the morning they sought
The prints of my feet they found only drifting needles of pine.

I am the last fairy that was nursed at the bosom of Vivien:

Ah, the Celts in their grey dreams knew me but now no more do they call
Through the thin sweet song of the rain when I hide by the shadowy eaves,
No more do the doors of the cottage stand ajar for the children of winds.

I am tired, the last fay made by Merlin and Vivien greater than Merlin,
And I would lie down asleep in the tremulous heart of the earth,
Leaving all mortals alone in their anger, their deep buried greed—
But with the last fairy die the sweet maddening cries of the Spring.



THE SINNERS

By Miffin Crane

I

WHEN she was an infant her nose was shapelessly small; at maturity her nose was as shapelessly large. Her eyes were little and as lustreless as faded blue calico. She had plenty of straw-coloured hair, but it was never her genius to pin it up becomingly. The angular conformation of her figure lacked any seductiveness. Mary was not a lovely woman.

At the age of eighteen she had hopeful thoughts of marriage. She regularly attended church and took part in the social activities connected with her place of worship, meeting by this device some of the young men of her town. But none of them ever called to see her and it was not her fortune to at any time have a lover. She read books of romance and her thoughts turned upon kisses; she imagined the sensations of a caress; she dreamed romantic episodes. Her mind cherished a vocabulary of endearments and from the lips of imaginary lovers she applied these to herself; she pencilled the love-avowals she found in her books; she committed verses to memory. Yet her dreams had no realization.

When Mary was twenty-two her father died and three years later the death of her mother followed. She now lived alone. In a year or two more the corners of her lips showed little, immobile lines and their curve was seldom that of a smile. She had never possessed a confidant for her hopes, and now the expression of them to her inner self was stilled. They were not gone, but they had no voice; they

lay in her heart like an entranced body, motionless and heavy.

In her town Mary was esteemed and held to be a very sensible young woman. She had executive capacity and was the organizer of church entertainments and bazaars. She could add a column of figures and was secretary and treasurer of the missionary society. Several women had remarked that it was a pity she did not marry, and others said that if the young men had any sense they would inevitably be attracted by Mary's virtues. Unfortunately, all the young men seemed deficient in sense.

At the age of twenty-eight Mary's life appeared to have settled into a certain ineluctable groove. Mary saw nothing ahead and she no longer dreamed. Her existence from day to day had been so reduced to rules without variation that the unexpected visit of her aunt in this year came with the surprise and effect of a great circumstance. Mary's aunt appeared one day with the suddenness of an act of God. She was accompanied by two large trunks and several hand-bags.

"I've been planning to come east for six months," she said. "And now I'm here! I don't want to make any extra trouble for you, dear, and I'll be in the city a good bit of the time, anyway. I've just come for one grand adventure in shopping!"

This proved to be the case. Mary's aunt spent three or four days each week in New York, returning each time with a mountain of packages. Her purchases were fabulously comprehensive; she exhibited fragile inner vestments; she showed Mary pale ribbons and embroideries. It was all quite incompre-

hensible, and Mary's aunt gave her no adequate explanations. The dénouement came with paralyzing unexpectancy.

One morning Mary's aunt took the local for New York without any special word. Late in the afternoon she returned, but not alone. Pinked by blushes, she presented herself to Mary leaning upon the arm of a middle-aged and not unhandsome man. Behind them a drayman waited for her trunks.

"We were married this morning," she said. "Forgive me! I wanted to surprise you!"

The same evening they left for their honeymoon.

Mary's astonishment was as stupefying as an unexpected drenching with cold water. Her aunt was by no means lovely, moreover she was nearly forty years old. A fire kindled in Mary's heart, that blew up to a leaping flame. Her old desire and her former hope revived. A sense of the insecurity and surprise of life thrilled her.

It was while in this mood that Mary, turning the leaves of a magazine, encountered a startling advertisement. Her eye read a titular two words that beat upon her brain with the effect of a tom-tom. In fascination she stared at the heavy type.

GET MARRIED!

For a few seconds the startling charm of these words chained her to them alone. As an apocalyptic command, the syllables of that magnificent adjuration moved her. Only through the increasing urge of her curiosity did she pass to the explanatory matter they captioned.

Here was unfolded to her an astonishing plan, a highroad to matrimony with the goal in plain sight. An inspired person, touched deeply by the loneliness of marriage-desirous humanity, undertook to bring together in acquaintance those men and women that would receive of his aid. For this service he made no charge whatever. Upon marriage one remitted him a small fee—a mere after-thought.

Yet Mary blushed, so dreadfully unconventional seemed this plan. After the first excitement of its discovery faded, she endeavoured to forget the whole scheme. Yet her mind was infected as by a virus. From hour to hour two words, set in heavy type, flamed in her mind in letters of unquenchable fire. For three days she fought the lure of their command, at last to fall, like a citadel that has been under siege. Mary wrote a hesitant letter of inquiry.

After several days a reply came to her. It congratulated her on her determination to marry. And in conclusion it said this: "We have sent your name to Mr. Jacob Fox, of Muskego, Indiana. As we accept no clients without investigation, you may be assured that Mr. Fox is an honorable gentleman. He will communicate with you through this office."

Mary waited, with a flushing fever of expectancy.

II

AMONG other things, Jacob Fox had lacked pulchritude from infancy. His brow was abnormally low and his hair sputtered up from it sparsely, like a tuft of bleached grass struggling for life on a sand-hill. His face had an unpleasant tendency to effloresce into knobby protuberances; his cheeks were as gnarled as a potato. Yet his impulses were generous and his disposition gentle.

In his town nobody paid him much attention. He went through high school, but during his passage he was never invited to join one of the undergraduate fraternities. He never learned how to dance, for the reason that he saw no prospect of being invited to a dance. He was quite an ordinary student.

After graduation Jacob became assistant in the hardware store owned by his father. For three years he served in this capacity, leaving the store only after the death of his father. He then sold the property and retired to an ineffectual existence alone.

His life was mainly sedentary, yet each spring a mania for walking seized him. During the early bourgeoning months he wandered about Muskego as if in search of something; he tramped over the level road, covering himself with dust; he loitered in the city park. Sometimes it seemed to him that he was on the brink of an adventure; he stared after girls in passing automobiles; nothing ever happened to him. As the heat of summer made itself manifest he would abandon his walks and take to the cool of his porch.

He had never learned to drink whiskey and he smoked but little. His chief dissipation was the moving pictures. Here, unsuspected, he indulged an imagination that lived lyrically, like a flower in a dust heap, under his herpetetic exterior. He preferred the heroines in curls, and once they appeared upon the screen he ceased to follow the incidents of the scenario, but projected himself into adventures with them, a fourth-dimensional inheritor. Seated in his uncomfortable chair, his knobby body faced the screen, an unlovely chrysalis only, from which had passed a glorified and metamorphosed Jacob, who now moved in brave and unseen encounter, the companion of sweet women. Yet in Muskego Jacob knew no women of any sort, save casually.

He was domestic and often the notion of marriage came to him, but he saw no way to that desideratum. It was not that he fastidiously required a beautiful woman, for his fancy would have furnished the beauty. It was that he lacked as an object any woman, beautiful or otherwise. He was as remotely separated from real romance as a castaway.

One evening he very casually encountered an advertisement in a magazine announcing a matrimonial agency. For a moment he was amused. He read the piece with a smile, conscious of its drollery. And then, quite suddenly, it engaged his mind with a personal significance. Droll or not, marriages probably were brought about by just these unconventional means. He shut

the book with a more serious countenance.

In the several days that followed, a resolution developed in his mind. Jacob neither fought nor encouraged it, and his natural impulses gave it growth. Finally he addressed a letter to the advertiser.

Less than a week later he received a reply in which he was given the name of a woman in New Jersey. He was instructed to write to her, and told that she already anticipated a letter from him.

Jacob put off writing for a day or two, inasmuch as he was at a loss just how to begin. At last, under the stress of a strongly felt obligation, he composed a letter that to him seemed very inadequate.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance," he said. "You must write to me and tell me all about yourself, for I am sure we want to know each other. I promise you to do the same."

He posted this document and then, overcome by a sense of excitement and romance, waited impatiently for some word in recognition of it.

III

A LETTER with an Indiana postmark came to Mary. As she opened it she blushed; as she read it her blushes deepened. The words were formal and restrained—it was the unconventionality of her situation that coloured Mary's cheeks.

Yet her hopes had ascended mightily and no considerations of propriety could restrain her from an answer. But the wording of it greatly troubled her. She made a rough draft initially, and it was some time before she passed the point of salutation. She began first, "Dear Mr. Fox." Drawing a line through this, she put down, with a warm countenance, "Dear Jacob." Almost immediately she drew her pencil through the words. She stared at the sheet a moment with a feverish uncertainty, confronted with a great dilemma. Presently she re-wrote, "Dear

Jacob," and permitting it to stand, hastened to the body of her letter.

She complied with his wishes—she told him of herself. She listed circumstances about herself like the catalogue description of a work of art. She minutely described the exterior conditions of her life, but she gave him none of her thoughts, her hopes, her desires, her aspirations. And into the envelope in which she mailed her letter she slipped her photograph.

Jacob read her document and multiplied his interest in her words by the imaginative matter with which he interlineated them. He set her photograph before him; it was not a beautiful face he saw; he caused it to appear beautiful. He then determined to satisfy a desire that had possessed him for many years, the great longing to write someone a genuine love letter.

He sat down to his task with poetic enthusiasm. Floridly he wrote, "Mary Adorable," and under this set what follows:

"I was deeply moved, greatly pleased, and immensely interested by your dear letter. I cannot tell you how delighted I am with you. Your picture stands before me and I am sure its eyes are looking out at me kindly. How I return their generous light! How I desire to see them in their reality!

"I know already that I am greatly fond of you. Ah! I know more! May I say it? I know . . . that I love you!

"I am positive a great happiness awaits us. I want you to marry me. Won't you marry me?"

Astonished and thrilled, Mary read this letter. The precipitancy of his ardour was like a tale from the books she had read. To his concluding query she said:

"How can I answer yet the question you ask me? We scarcely know each other. We must wait until we have learned more about each other."

To this Jacob countered with mystical phrases:

"I feel that I have known you for a long, long time," he wrote. "Can it be

—but no! I must not grow superstitious. It is simply that two hearts made to be one from the beginning of time have at last come to know each other. Do not hesitate, my sweetheart. I love you. Say that you will marry me."

Mary questioned, still parrying:

"Is there no way that we can meet first?"

Jacob replied with a bold plan:

"I will come to New York. Meet me the day I arrive; we will see each other and talk together. If you are not then convinced of my love, you can return home and no one will know that we have met."

After a night of torturing uncertainty, Mary wrote to him, consenting to the scheme he had devised. By return mail he set a date for his appearance in the city.

Mary prepared for the trip, all the while confused by a sense of double personality. One of her selves rushed wildly into a mad enterprise, while the other stood by, regarding her activities with a chilling disapproval. Never was Mary more aware of that catalogue of conventional restraints she called her conscience. Yet, under the urge of her dreams and her pent desires, she surged with rebellion, making her preparations with an increased fervor.

She arrived in the city late in the afternoon and hurried to a discreet lodging house, situated well uptown. Jacob, by her last letter, had been made acquainted with the address. He was to meet her there the next morning. Her room fronted on the street. The tall window was hung with a long, yellowed lace curtain, like a veil. Pushing this aside, Mary looked out and down in the street she saw the tops of passing automobiles and the dissonance of the city came into her ears.

The strangeness of her surroundings brought suddenly into her mind her appalling purpose in the city. She dropped the curtain; the pupils of her eyes expanded widely; she looked quickly about the room as if in anticipation of another presence. Her re-

bellion reasserted itself; swiftly, but almost furtively, she crossed the room; she opened a suitcase that lay on the bed, tumbling two or three garments out on the sheet. Exposed now to view lay some very heretical articles that she had purchased.

Like an anarchistic refrain, three rebellious words repeated themselves in her mind, "I don't care!" They sounded recurrent, like the voice of a sin.

She took out a skirt, and slipping off that one she had worn to the city, she put it on. It terminated above her shoe-tops and an inch or two of silk hose was displayed. On Mary's straight legs, accustomed to cotton, the feel of silk produced a simple sensation.

Completing the change in her attire, Mary removed three or four small boxes from her suitcase and turned to the dressing table that stood near her bed. She sat down in front of the mirror. Opening a carton, she took out a jar of white vanishing cream. With the tips of her fingers she rubbed the cream into her face in awkward motions, unused to that exercise. Out of another carton she took a flat cake of rouge, with which she touched her cheeks, creating two splotches of grotesque red. Over the immobile lines of her thin lips she passed a rouge-stick and the paint clung there in palpable incongruity. She pencilled her eyes; they looked out at her from the mirror in startled caricature. And with a piece of chamois she bleached her face with white powder.

It had grown dark outside and Mary turned on the lights in her room. For some time she lacked the courage to put on her hat and go out to supper. At last, under another systole of rebellion, she mastered her timidities and putting her room in darkness, she closed the door behind her and went quietly downstairs.

On the street she walked aimlessly at first. Now and again a man stared at her, whereat she quickened her pace. Finally her hunger became assertive

and she entered a restaurant. She ate quickly. Two or three men, dining in the place, looked at her and grinned. Mary thought they were trying to flirt with her. She was relieved to get outside again.

A faint sense of terror came to Mary's spirit. She passed a moving picture theater and, turning back, she went in, as if in search of shelter. She walked down the darkened aisle slowly. An usher pointed out in the gloom two empty chairs and she seated herself in one of them.

IV

JACOB FOX arrived in the city several hours before Mary. He endeavored to appear metropolitan, but nobody gave him any attention. Endless crowds hurried past him, their aims strangely inscrutable. Jacob wondered at their hurry and endeavored to surmise their goals.

In the afternoon he made his way to the park. He came to a building that housed wild animals and he pushed in among the crowd of visitors that added their portion to the odor of the place. He stopped in front of a cage in which a lioness paced with feral nervousness about the sleeping bodies of three or four cubs. A man and a woman stood in front of him. The man's hand was passed through the woman's arm and Jacob saw his fingers press upon her coat sleeve. She turned, and he had a glimpse of her profile, with a smile for her companion curved on her lips. Jacob felt a thrill of anticipation.

His imagination turned to his meeting with Mary. He wondered how she would greet him. He hoped for a manner that was romantic; he desired that their first moments should be instantly lighted with fervor.

And then, he was impatient.

He wished that it was not necessary to wait until the morning. Wandering out of the park, he looked at the face of each girl that passed him, and found all of them adventurous.

A craving for immediate adventure touched him. It seemed incredible that in so vast a place, in so great a clangour, adventure did not come at once to him.

Jacob ate very little supper, for he was indifferent to food. He went out on the streets again that now, in the plumage of night, seemed more potential with romance.

But nothing happened to him and at last he grew tired. He paused before the posters of a moving picture theater. An engauded lithograph presented him with the portrait of a little girl in curls. Paying his admission, Jacob went in.

The usher flashed an electric torch, showing him an empty seat. Jacob dropped into it, giving a quick glance to the side. A woman sat in the chair next to him. Her features were indistinguishable, for Jacob's eyes were not yet accustomed to the gloom. A perfume from her crossed his nostrils as he turned to look at the screen.

Suddenly the light of the screen was blotted out, as if a sable curtain had been swiftly dropped over it. The dimmed lights in the house went black. A murmur and a shuffling arose in the audience; two or three girls giggled; a little, laughing scream was heard in the back. There was a running of attendants to locate the trouble.

Jacob felt the woman at his side stir, and by her movement he was made acutely conscious of her. Her perfume seemed stronger and he breathed it like a wine. Again she stirred and he felt her arm press against his sleeve.

The darkness was impenetrable. He could not see her face. Into the moment crowded all his desires of adventure, and an abandon that drew its strength from the darkness possessed him. He turned swiftly, putting out his hands. They closed over her face.

At his touch he felt her head draw back—and then yield. He drew her face toward him and searched for her lips. He found them, and they clung to his intensely. For moments, their lips touching, both were immobile, like figures in a florid painting.

And then the woman drew back suddenly and Jacob's hands slipped from her cheeks, falling over her arm. The embrace broken, he was assailed by fears, his life-long timidities possessed him utterly. A dread of the moment when the lights would come up filled his mind. He arose quickly, and half running, stumbled up the aisle toward the exit, where an usher pressed an electric torch. He passed out to the street, breathing rapidly.

And, relaxed in her chair, Mary seemed not to breathe. She heard the man who had kissed her rise and hurry away and her ears followed his stumbling steps. The substance of her life was streaked with lurid colors; she was conscious of amazing deviltry; she was frightened.

V

SEATED in the parlor of her lodging house, Mary looked nervously at the clock and waited. A drab morning light came in through the windows. She was dressed now as she had been on the moment of leaving her home. Her cheeks had their customary pallor and her lips were without color.

She heard the bell ring. A maid answered the summons and a male voice that spoke her name came to her ears. She arose quickly and stood before the door.

Jacob entered the room.

He recognized her, for he had looked at her photograph a thousand times. She stood before him, straight and pale, and his imagination at once clothed her in garments of idealism. He felt that he should break into lyric speech, that he should take her tenderly in his arms. Yet his lips refused to form words and his hands fumbled along the seams of his trousers.

Into Mary's mind and into Jacob's mind came the remembrance of the kiss they had known the night before. Looking at Jacob, Mary thrilled. She did not repent her sinning, although she

knew it was over. From this man, whom she was to marry, she would have one flaming secret, never to be spoken, never for him to know!

And Jacob, looking at Mary, thinking of his second of fire in the darkness, knew there was one moment, in the confessions of his life he might subsequently give her, that he would never tell, that she would never learn!

"This . . . this is Mary?" he asked, haltingly.

"Yes . . . Jacob . . ." she returned.

His urge was to press her to him; her desire was to fall into his arms. But the daylight came through the window mercilessly . . .

"How do you do?" said Jacob.

"How do you do?" said Mary.

They shook hands.



DISTANCES

By Louis Untermeyer

I READ your note, and with it comes
Your fresh and intimate mystery;
It stirs my blood as though great drums
Were calling out in me.

Out of the struggling lines, your hand
Gropes and your soft eyes make me start;
Your lips brush mine, although we stand
A hundred miles apart.

Yet when we two come face to face,
I feel a greater sense of loss;
There seems to be a widening space
We cannot hope to cross.

The distance grows, it stretches far,
Even when we live heart to heart:
You hold me close—and yet we are
Ten thousand miles apart!



THE coldest heart always excels in paying clever compliments. For this reason love-thirsty women generally prefer stammerers.



WHEN a woman audibly doubts a man's sincerity she is positive, at last, that he is sincere.



AN OLD JEST

By George Barron

THE moon is smiling broadly tonight. He has heard an old jest told again. The girl looking into my eyes is warmly pale in his radiance, his cold light has dimmed the brilliance of her cheeks, and touched her lips with purple. She is listening, enthralled, for I have been telling her the customary things. Perhaps I have been unusually silent, therefore she is doubly convinced. Perhaps I have been unusually brief, therefore she is waiting eagerly for more. Perhaps I have been unusually vague, therefore she is anxious for details. Sufficient that she is interested.

The moon is smiling broadly tonight. He has heard an old jest told again.



RETORT COURTEOUS

By John McClure

BEAUTY, beauty
Cannot be
Always gay and good to see:
Beauty withers certainly,
Lady, lady!

I have loved and I have lost:
It is you shall count the cost.
You have broke my heart in two:
It shall be as good as new.
But your loveliness shall fade,

Wither, vanish like a shade,
Like an echo, like a flower—
It is fading at this hour.
Then when you are wan and gray,
Men shall look another way.

Lady, lady,
Can you tell
Which of us is nearer hell?
Can you tell it, tell it me,
Lady, lady!

THE EVICTION

By Burton Kline

ABOVE all else Wharton preferred to be thought of as a fighter. Regular up and down he-man, that's what he was. Bluff and blunt, almost explosive, in his speech. He wanted people to know, by the Great Horn Spoon, where he stood. His very hair, copper-colored and brushed into a formidable pompadour, itself fairly bristled.

"Well! You old pickled sardine! How be ye!" Such was apt to be his habitual greeting of a friend.

Or, "You poor fried egg, now what do *you* want?" he would say to a friendly visitor to his office.

Wharton was a lawyer. And you would think him ideally suited to the calling.

Probably he would have made a lawyer, if he had practised law. The truth about Wharton was that he was lazy. A competence permitted him to have a fashionable bachelor apartment, to wear smart raiment, and belong to smart clubs. And, to be fair with him, once in a while he did pitch in and practise some law. His friends alone would have given him many a case if they had been sure that he wanted them. As it was they got him to draw up their wills. And one of them induced him to collect the rents on a group of tenements.

What famous letters Wharton could write! The ordinary lawyer's letter brings shudders enough to a delinquent debtor, but Wharton's letters would cast a gloom over the entire community. After one of them, the sight of even his name on the envelope was enough to induce a sinking spell. There was no mistaking him. Wharton was a fighter.

The one trouble with him was that he was a fighter without a steady job. So seldom did he have anything to fight.

One day, however, the owner of the tenements called at Wharton's office in a tall building adjoining the financial district of the town.

"Well, well, well! You fine, two-handed money-grubber! Now what's the trouble with you?"

"Nothing colossal. But how about that old lady Grinnell? Has she paid up?"

"No! And by heck, we'll see about that!" Wharton made a rush for his file. "No, by George! She hasn't! And I wrote her a letter that must have put a crimp in her hair. I gave her three days to come across."

"Maybe she can't read." The tenement owner was a dry fellow.

"You bet she can read. I'll get after that dame again, in a way so she'll know it, by ginger!" And Wharton pushed the button for his stenographer.

"Just a moment," his visitor stayed him. "Haven't we been patient long enough with that old dame? She sets a bad example to the rest of the tenants in that building. What do you say? Let's get after her."

"Sure, we'll get after her!"

"Yes, I know. But let's—let's take steps."

"Steps'? What steps?"

"Well—" The landlord faltered. "I suppose it will be hard. I'm no blamed Shylock. And I understand that woman has children. And it *has* been a hard winter. But this thing can't go on. They'll all begin to copy her."

Let's—let's evict her. It will teach 'em a lesson."

"Just as you say, old man!" Wharton brought his fist down on the desk, so that the paper weights hopped and danced.

The landlord rose to go. "Might as well do it soon, what? She'll postpone and postpone forever, if we don't."

"Time the blow, and it's as good as done!"

"Well—" The landlord paused with his hand on the knob. "Make it today, why not?"

"Today! So be it!" Again the thump on the desk.

And the landlord friend departed.

II

WHEN he had gone Wharton did a strange thing—for Wharton. He winced.

"H'm!" he said to himself, with his face still awry.

New experience, this, for Wharton.

"Evict her, eh?" he said. "H'm!"

And he leaned back in his swivel chair to think it over.

He sat there an hour, thinking it over. Then he clapped on his hat, and jerked on his fur coat, and went to the nearest of his clubs. It might be he would find some lawyer friend there, who could give him a tip or two as to how the thing was done. But at that hour of the morning the club was deserted, and Wharton was left to think it over. A glance at the clock told him it was quarter to twelve—just when Mrs. Grinnell would be preparing her luncheon. No time to pounce on her! She'd be sure to be tired and in a nasty humor. Better wait till after luncheon. People are reasonable after luncheon. Half the business of the world is done over the luncheon table. And Wharton picked up a paper to pass the time.

And dropped it promptly. On the front page, under blazing headlines, was a column-long account of a cruel eviction. He bolted into the library, and there stood a row of Dickens to

plague him. Dickens he knew only too well.

"What are you going to do about it?" asked the friend who joined him for luncheon at one.

"Oh, I'm going to pounce right on her! There's only one way to grasp the thorn!"

"I don't envy you the job."

After luncheon Wharton fell in with another friend who proposed a game of billiards.

"Well, I'm glad I'm no lawyer!" quoth he when he heard Wharton's account of the business.

About four o'clock that afternoon the fighting Wharton left the club for his interview with Mrs. Grinnell. He could fairly see her as he walked along. He knew the type—tearful, woful, whining, begging, blackguardly, gray-haired, stooped, promising anything and everything for a little more time.

None of that for Wharton! He quickened his steps, so that he plunged along, to have the thing over with in a flourish. And thunderous was the knock he administered to Mrs. Grinnell's door.

The door was opened, but the gray-haired, cringing woman was not in view. In her stead was a small, slight, tired woman with dark hair, with large dark eyes, with a bit of sewing in her hand, and a smile.

"I'm Mr. Wharton," said Wharton, as if that finished everything. "I'm here to see Mrs. Grinnell. Isn't this her place? Is she here?"

A serious expression melted the smile on the woman's face, and she said, "I am Mrs. Grinnell." After a moment she added, "Won't you come in?"

III

WHARTON entered. And it happened not to be a dirty hovel he entered. It was a clean pair of rooms. The windows were crossed by curtains that happened to be white. The only telltale thing about the place was the dismal creak of the chair as Wharton, puffing

from his rapid walk in a heavy coat, sat down.

"Are you really Mr. Wharton?" asked the widow, by way of relieving the strain. "If you'll pardon me, you don't look a bit like your letters."

"Flattery!" thought Wharton.

He was still on his guard, studying what form of Billingsgate he might expect and how he would meet it, when Mrs. Grinnell said on,

"I know what you've come for, Mr. Wharton. And—"

The blast was about to begin, then, thought Wharton. Would it be tears or imprecations?"

"I'm ready," the even voice went on. "Ready for anything." Mrs. Grinnell's eyes swept her simple belongings as if in farewell.

"I suppose I have been foolish. The women about here don't need much sewing that they can't do for themselves. Most of them have to do their own. And others from a distance, maybe, don't like to come into this neighborhood. It would have been better to move. But I never could get money enough together to move. And—" She laughed lightly, and the dark eyes turned from a vacant stare out of the window to Wharton. "And I can't seem to make money enough to stay here! Isn't it a predicament! I'm—I'm really sorry to have given you so much trouble, Mr. Wharton. I must say, you've been patient. But—"

Wharton was scarcely even thinking. He sat there as one sits at a concert, listening to a voice. If he thought anything at all, it was, "Oh, damn that tightwad and Shylock for wishing me into this!"

But Mrs. Grinnell was leaving such a blank for him to fill, in the long pause that ensued, that he felt obliged to say something. Hence he shifted uneasily in his chair, and perspired in his coat.

"Won't you take it off?" Mrs. Grinnell noticed his trouble, and rose to relieve him. "It's Persian lamb, isn't it?" She held up the garment for a moment's admiration. "Strangely like one my

husband used to have. I was—so sorry to give it up."

"Well—er—really—" Again Wharton felt obliged to say something, but ended with clearing his throat.

Mrs. Grinnell had sat down again.

"I suppose," she hesitated, "you want me to get out?" She, at least, was able to come to the point.

"Well—er—I tell you, Mrs. Grinnell, I'm not acting on my own account, you understand. You understand that, don't you? I'm—I'm simply under instructions from my client."

"It must be hard for you. I think we don't give lawyers credit for hating to do what they have to do."

"Well—er—I—I agree!"

"But in a way, Mr. Wharton, I'm glad you've come. I knew it was hanging over me. It's better to have it over. I—suppose I might obtain charity to— to tide me over, and provide me with things, till I can get going again. Perhaps in a better place, where my work would bring in enough to support me. But one does hate to do that. I've been foolish, perhaps, to delay. Still it's so much pleasanter, making your own way in the world. Isn't it?"

"I—I agree!"

"But—of course—it must be." Mrs. Grinnell paused for a brief moment. "I'll miss it here. You may laugh at that, but it's true. You see, I used to work among people like these all about me, and I learned to know them—or thought I did. I certainly know them now, now that I live among them. And one can endure anything, it seems to me, when one is so touched all the time by the kindness of people. Don't you think so?"

"Oh—oh, yes! Oh, yes!"

"Excuse me, Mr. Wharton. You must think I am trying to work on your sympathies. But there is one thing I would really like to ask. If you can really see your way to it. I wish my—my leaving needn't be made—made too public. I don't care for myself, but I'm afraid the neighbors might feel called upon to help me again. And

they have done already more than they should. Otherwise—"

She paused for her answer.

"Well, now, I tell you, Mrs.—Mrs. Grinnell—er—it *may* be—"

"Oh, I'm so glad! It would spare my children, too. They'll miss it here. It will be—be hard for them to leave. They like the school and the other children, and I've been glad for it. They're bright little things, my boys, and work hard, and I'm sure they're going to get on. But it will always be good for them to have lived here. They'll understand so many things afterward. So— Really, it must be painful for you—such work as this."

"It is! It certainly is, Mrs. Grinnell! You've no idea—"

"Well, let's get it over with as soon as we can, Mr. Wharton. Don't mind me. We'll both feel better then."

Wharton was fumbling about in an inside coat pocket for memoranda. "Let's see, Mrs. Grinnell—er—how much—? Confound it! I seem to have left the slip in my office!"

"It's \$49 I owe."

"Well—" Wharton let his hand rest across his breast in the pocket. "Er—you say it's \$49?" He whipped out his hand. "Well, here it is."

"The—the summons? I—I think you've made a mistake."

"Yes, I've made a mistake—in com-

ing here for that damned old shyster, your crab of a landlord! I'm done with him!" Wharton rose, puffing and fuming "I say, Mrs. Grinnell, I hope you can overlook this. I feel damned crummy for coming here." Wharton again held out the packet of bank-notes. "I know this is a rotten way of doing it—patronizing, and all that. But if you can see your way to—to a little—call it a loan! Call it anything you like! And here's a little advance, to—to tide you over till you get going again!"

And Wharton grabbed his coat and burst out of the door. . . .

IV

NEXT day the landlord called on Wharton, to inquire about results.

"Well, you croaking old crab! You want to count the scratches on me, do you?"

"Is—she gone?"

"She's going! You—*bet*—she's going! That woman's going to get out of there! I usually do what I set out to do, don't I? Well, I'm going round there tomorrow *personally* to see that woman make tracks for somewhere else. And you keep away. It wouldn't be healthy for you to be about. She'd leave you a ruin!"

And Wharton thumped his desk.



QUANDARY

By Kenneth Tirowen

I WOULD sing you songs
Dawn and evening,
Sad songs, mad songs,
About everything—

Passion and flowers,
Star-dust and dew. . . .
This alone hinders:
Who are you?

LES DEUX VIEUX

By Emile Delta

ILS vivaient heureux dans une modeste maisonnette qu'ils s'étaient construite, pierre à pierre, sou par sou.

Le village entier leur témoignait une pieuse vénération; c'est qu'ils formaient le plus vieux ménage du pays et les ménages nouveaux s'appliquaient à les prendre comme modèle, en se répétant tout le bien qu'ils en avaient entendu dire par les parents défunts.

Quel âge avaient-ils? Au moins quatre-vingts ans; lui, toujours alerte, le corps droit, l'œil vif; elle, le visage toujours souriant, la voix douce, la taille légèrement voûtée, tant il est vrai, d'après les grands-mères, que la lutte pour l'existence est plus âpre, plus exténuante chez la femme que chez son compagnon mieux doté physiquement.

Ils n'avaient pas d'enfants et on ne leur connaissait pas de parents; ou, plutôt, on leur en connaissait de si éloignés et habitant en des contrées tellement lointaines, assurait-on, que tout compte fait ils vivaient seuls au monde.

A en croire la légende, car une légende s'était créée autour de leurs personnes, ils avaient beaucoup souffert dans leur enfance. S'étant rencontrés, ils s'apitoyèrent sur leur sort et se prirent d'amitié. Cette amitié devint de l'affection; il en germa de l'Amour.

Oh! son homme, comme elle le chérissait!... Son homme, mais c'était tout pour elle!... Elle n'aurait point toléré qu'il sortît sans être bien "détiré" et quand il parlait de se rendre jusqu'au hameau voisin, elle le contraignait à boire et à manger beaucoup, afin de braver la fatigue.

Et sa femme, donc!...

Eh! eh! elle était encore séduisante,

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savez-vous; aussi, maintes jeunesses étaient en droit (elles s'y autorisaient, d'ailleurs) de s'inquiéter du secret d'une telle verdure.

Ménage charmant et édifiant. Jamais entre eux la moindre discussion; jamais le plus petit mot désagréable.

Ils cheminaient, celle-ci appuyée sur le bras de celui-là, comme s'ils avaient été rivés par quelque lien céleste, — "céleste", parce que je n'en ai vu, depuis, aucun autre semblable entre êtres humains.

Il était à croire que la mort les eut publiés. S'ils avaient connu des tracasseries, des soucis, la maladie, du moins, malgré ses formes multiples, les avait épargnés. Ils s'en glorifiaient: "Avec nous, pas besoin de médecins."

Cependant, en dépit de la fraîcheur de sa mine, dont il était souvent complimenté, le bonhomme se sentait, parfois, mal à l'aise.

Quand il sortait et qu'il l'accélérait le pas, il fallait qu'il s'arrêtât; la respiration lui manquait, le cœur fonctionnait mal:

"—Ça me jouera un vilain tour", disait-il à sa femme, tout en refoulant ses appréhensions intimes.

"—Pourquoi t'inquiéter et m'inquiéter en même temps? Moi aussi, ça me fait ça, observait-elle. Va toujours, nous sommes taillés pour vivre cent ans."

Or, un soir, à la brune, un voisin aperçut le bon vieux accoté, immobile, au talus d'un sentier. Il paraissait s'être assis là, tranquillement, son bâton entre les jambes, encore enlacé au poignet par une mince lanière de cuir.

...Pourtant, cette tête inclinée bas

sur la poitrine; la pluie qui commence à tomber à grosses guottes et semble laisser le bonhomme indifférent, donnent à réfléchir au passant,—qui s'approche.

Le bonhomme ne bouge point et reste muet: son cœur—son pauvre cœur qui n'en pouvait plus—a cessé de battre!...

...Sous la pluie, qui continue de choir et sème, pourrait-on croire, des larmes sur son cadavre, le vieux, étendu rigide sur un brancard de feuillages, s'en revint porté jusqu'au logis.

Sa femme, apeurée, l'attendait.

Tout dè suite, elle comprit. Elle ne gémit point; elle ne pleura ni n cria.

Quand elle fut laissée seule à le veiller, elle l'embrassa farouchement, longuement, tendrement, sur son front déjà de glace.

Puis, elle voulut que, pour le "grand voyage" il fut comme elle avait obtenu, dans son orgueil d'épouse, qu'il fut sa vie durant, bien propre, presque coquet.

De linge blanc, fleurant bon l'odeur de lavande qu'il prisait tant, elle le vêtit. Dernière toilette!...

C'est ainsi qu'il la quitta...

Lorsqu'au tournant de la route, le convoi funèbre disparut à ses yeux, elle murmura: "Au revoir! à bien tôt!... Mon cœur, à son tour, va cesser d'être, car il ne battait plus que pour toi!"

Sur la haute cheminée de leur chambre, elle prit un portrait qu'elle appuyait sur ses lèvres. Elle l'y maintint longtemps, très longtemps. Qui l'aurait vue, aurait pu croire qu'elle espérait insuffler à l'image un peu de la vie qu'elle sentait circuler encore faiblement à travers ses pauvres membres.

Soudain, elle s'affaissa.

Ses doigts—suprême étreinte!—broyèrent le cadre.

Et dans la modeste et gaie maisonnette (qu'ils s'étaient construite, jadis, pierre à pierre, sou par sou), régna, désormais, le silence lugubre du tombeau.



JEALOUSY

By Susanne Trevor

HE is looking slyly at the woman at the next table.

Her evening gown is as revealing as an X-ray,

It is as insufficient as her own hair,

It is as startling as her complexion,

There is no more to it than there is truth in a married man's explanation of how he happened to be in a taxi with a chorus girl.

And he is looking at her,

Interestedly.

I must find out the name of her *modiste*,

For I intend to get another evening gown immediately.



WINE, WOMAN AND SONG

By George Jean Nathan

OF the baby talk that pervades the native journalistic theatrical criticism, not the least rich gurgle is that commonly achieved by the professors of blarney in the presence of a music show. Confronted with an exhibit of stripe slightly superior to that wherein the nephew palms off the burlesque queen as his wife on the rich uncle from Rio de Janeiro and the professors, a-gush with soft impeachments, are forthwith beheld sucking the cerebral forefinger and rolling the sheepy pupil. And bursting presently with the glows and agitations of the intoxicating amour, are further beheld seizing the hip and stepping forth in brave soprano to exclaim that here again, thank goodness, is a music show "that does not insult the intelligence."

There is in this ecstasy not, as one might believe, merely the customary desire to tickle the managers at whatever cost to critical honesty, but critical honesty itself, and of a very sincere and devout kidney. For these professors of the dailies still candidly esteem a catering to intelligence as a virtue in the music show, where almost everyone else, of course, appreciates that a music show that doesn't brazenly insult the intelligence is about as apposite and stimulating as an intellectual pretty girl, or going 'round on a carousel to the accompaniment of Bach's B minor mass, or getting a slant on with the kind of man who can tell offhand exactly who Karl Gützlauff was, when and where he was born, and what were his chief works.

Although the American music show at its best has set a standard for the world, although in beauty, colour and

movement it marks the one signal achievement of the American theater, the truth is that its grave shortcoming is the presence, and even dominance, in it of the very intellectual quality so unctuously acclaimed by the journalists. This is the precise quality one goes to a music show to avoid, since the music show occupies to the theater and drama the same relationship that the Café d'Harcourt occupies to the Luxembourg, that alcohol occupies to art: a convivial moment of forgetfulness, an opportunity to unbutton the waistcoat and get chummy with the garçons, a chance to cast off restraint and, in a measure, let fly at the chandelier. And the music show that best serves this end is certainly less the music show that vouchsafes a coherent plot, symmetrical lyrics and a musicianly score than the music show that vouchsafes in the stead of these some imbecile comic dialogue liberally interspersed with loud paddlings of the comedian's seat, some barroom *scherzi* and forty or fifty rosy-cheeked trollops.

More often, however, the native music show takes itself with deadly seriousness and the result is an American music show stage that actually is twice as intellectual as the American dramatic stage, and actually of three times the comparative philosophical depth. Take, in example, on the side of the native dramatic stage, the last four plays of Mr. Augustus Thomas, a playwright whose works may surely be accepted as more than merely a fair criterion of that stage's intellectual and philosophical attainments. These plays are (1) "As a Man Thinks," (2) "Indian Summer," (3) "Rio Grande"

and (4) "The Copperhead." A scrutiny of the pneumatology of these *opera* produces the following creams. First, "As a Man Thinks" argues eloquently (a) that a woman who commits adultery is not as pure in morals as a woman who does not commit adultery, and (b) that if a married woman commits adultery, her husband, if he would thereafter live happily with her, had best keep his mind off the *faux pas*. Second "Indian Summer" establishes the fact that a young woman is grateful to an elderly man whose self-sacrifices have helped her father out of serious trouble. Third, "Rio Grande" demonstrates (a) that a girl married to a man old enough to be her father sometimes seeks the love of a younger man, and (b) that her husband is angry when he finds out about it. And fourth, "The Copperhead" eulogizes as patriot and martyr a man who brings ruin to his household, sends his son to the grave despising him and causes his wife's death rather than betray a confidence, and who then eventually justifies himself in breaking the confidence on the ground that it threatens to keep his granddaughter from getting the job of teacher in the district school.

Take now, by way of example on the side of the musical stage, four typical shows presented during a like space of time, say such diversified exhibitions as "Madame Troubadour," "Adele," "Sari" and something by George Cohan. A scrutiny here produces the following philosophies. First, where "As a Man Thinks" argues for the double standard of sex, "Madame Troubadour" argues for the single standard (surely a less hackneyed argument and one, despite its age, more philosophically piquing), and, further, for the re-establishment of happy relations between the offending woman and her husband not through so spurious a sentimental tactic as that advanced by Mr. Thomas, but through the less sentimental and doubly sound motive advanced by Hervieu in "Connais Toi." Second, where "Indian Summer" ar-

gues and endorses the sympathy of youth with age and age's sacrifices, "Adele," after the more searching philosophy of Nietzsche, argues at bottom that such sympathy on the part of youth stands in direct antithesis to the tonic passions which elevate the energy of human beings, that it thwarts the law of development and evolution, and that, contrary to the Thomas happy-ending *bouquet*, it is at once a multiplier of misery and a conservator of misery. Third, where "Rio Grande" promulgates the news that a young girl married to an old man is often impelled to seek love elsewhere and that the inevitable result is unhappiness for the man, "Sari" admits the hoary platitude before the curtain goes up and proceeds to work out the philosophy in the more sophisticated terms of Boufflers and Voltaire. And fourth, where "The Copperhead" interprets patriotism as being largely a logical reaction, a George Cohan show, with infinitely more acumen, albeit possibly unintentional, interprets it as a reaction related less to logic than to pure feeling and emotion.

This comparison of the relative intellectuality of the serious drama and the music show may at first glance seem absurd; it may appear that virtues have been read into the latter by mere way of rounding out a desired paradox; but this is anything but true. Compare, without prejudice, the attitude toward national life, morals and ethical conduct of some such music show libretto as George Ade's "Sultan of Sulu" or Henry Blossom's "Yankee Consul" with the attitude of some such play as Thomas' "In Mizoura" or Tarkington and Street's "Country Cousin," and see which is the sharper, the more illuminating, and intrinsically the sounder. The theory that philosophy always wears whiskers and never smiles is a theory that dies hard, and therein we have the delusion that the lighter form of theatrical entertainment must of necessity be generically of a lesser thoughtfulness than the dramatic. Nevertheless, there is more

thought, more acute observation of the contemporary times and manners, and more sagacious comment on life in a single music show book of the memorable Gilbert than in all the plays Sydney Grundy, R. C. Carton, Charles Klein, Louis N. Parker, Alfred Sutro and Charles Rann Kennedy ever wrote.

Such musical comedies as "Sari" are, true enough, the food of good diversion, but when I say that they yet fail to meet the exact and perfect requirements of the music show stage, I by no means overwhelm myself with an ambiguity. A musical comedy, at best, is the orphan of an opera. And the person who enjoys a musical comedy at its best is the person who would much rather hear an opera instead. The musical comedy is to this person what a snack in the Amiens station room is to the traveler on his way to Paris and dinner in the Café Viel: the unsatisfying best that is to be had at the moment. The better musical comedy, in a word, is not a thing in and of itself; it is a mere bridge, a mere bite of milk chocolate *in transitu*, a mere temporary pulling in the belt a couple of notches. Its place on the amusement stage—the stage of the popular theater—is no more authentic than would be the place of intellectual drama on the operatic stage. The popular stage is rather the place for the sort of music show to which I have hitherto alluded, the show like "The Follies," or like the Winter Garden entertainments, or like Fred Stone's "Jack o' Lantern" and Hitchcock's "Hitchy-Koo" . . . The critic who goes to a music show to hear fine music and a rational theme is the critic who goes to the Metropolitan Opera House to look at Mary Garden's shape.

The trouble with our music show stage, to repeat, is that it is too greatly the toady to rhyme and reason, too greatly concerned with the extrinsic thing that passes Rialto-wise for intelligence. One does not visit a bordello to hear the duenna quote Karl Marx and the professor play Rimsky-Korsakoff. Nor does one go to a music show for a Björnson plot or the symphonic

poems of a Liszt. One goes, very simply, to lay an eye to warmly lighted, brilliantly coloured scenery and a chorus of good-looking wenches led by some fancy imported houri, to some such crazy drollery as Harry Watson's imitation of famous men like Mr. Park, of Park and Tilford, whom one always hears about but never sees, to osculatory comedians climbing up the prima donna on a step-ladder, to fat men and dancing girls and makers of funny faces, and to Justine Johnstone hopping over a brown canvas trench waving a tin sword and putting to rout the Hun army.

Of all American music show producers, none is so acutely privy to this secret as Mr. Ziegfeld. And none, by the same mark, so successful. Where other producers are forever making laborious efforts to get sense into their shows, this Ziegfeld works might and main to get sense *out* of his. To this end, he sometimes deliberately employs the very best dullest librettists money can hire—men like Mr. George V. Hobart, for example—to fashion his exhibits for him. And the result is generally a show thoroughly to the taste of the theater-goer who goes to a music show for what it is and should be and who, just as he has become studiously engrossed in Miss Pennington's masterly interpretation of the hoochie-coochie, doesn't care to have his researches interrupted by the intrusion of some plotty theorem. The libretto of a Ziegfeld show does not, in the phrase of the journalists, insult the intelligence; it merely lets the intelligence sleep. And this is precisely what the libretto of a good music show should do. Nor is this greatly less true on the higher plane. The one striking flaw in "The Chocolate Soldier" is the too provocative book; it crowds altogether too harshly upon the beautiful score.

Glancing back upon my disquisitions in other months, I observe that I have already expounded the theory that the success of a music show may be estimated in the degree that it caters discreetly to masculine wickedness, and

that, since such wickedness has been aptly defined as the admiration of innocence, the show that most cunningly capitalizes innocence is the show that most prosperously serves its ends. It is in this very enterprise, as I have also pointed out, that Mr. Ziegfeld excels. Give him a woman whose Awakening to Spring occurred back in 1880 and who hasn't closed an eye since, and he can yet dress the archæologist up in such a manner and present her in such wise that she will have the aspect of Little Eva. The common error into which this impresario's critics fall lies in the belief that his exhibitions are successful because they palm off intrinsic innocence in the light of something slyly wicked. The truth of course is that his exhibitions are successful—doubtless the most uniformly successful in the world—for precisely the opposite reason. They palm off the intrinsically wicked as something slyly innocent. If, as Mr. Ziegfeld's critics imagine, his shows habitually succeed because of their complete lack of wickedness and correlative dominance of the quality of innocence, such a thoroughly innocent music show as "Iole," a show without so much as a trace of wickedness, would make twice the fortune of the "Follies."

But this Ziegfeld is not merely a virtuoso of virgins. Just as the enormous popularity and world-wide appeal of the "Merry Widow" waltz was clearly and astutely figured out by Dr. Stefan Deliya, of the Clinical Hospital of Vienna, in a pamphlet published in 1914 by A. W. Künast and Paul Knepler, so has Ziegfeld worked out and negotiated the Deliya findings in the matter of the musical accompaniments to his own shows. This secret of aphrodisiac rhythm is one of the underlying secrets of the success of both the "Follies" and the various "Frolics." Its presence makes a Ziegfeld show as inevitably as its absence unmakes a Morosco show or a Cort show. For the music show that is a music show is the show that loudly insults the intelligence and softly assaults the emotions.

II

THIS extraordinary flow of eloquence is brewed from a vision of the latest "Frolic" staged by Ziegfeld on the roof of the New Amsterdam. Although not so attractive as the antecedent "Frolic," it still reveals an adroitness and dexterity that are rarely met with in the instance of the native music show. The badinage is the frank, easy badinage of burlesque in place of the conventional heavy music show attempt to paraphrase Ambrose Bierce's "Devil's Dictionary," the tunes are rolled out by a genuinely musical lot of coons in place of the usual tone-deaf union batch of naturalized Swiss professors, and the girls, though substantially as unornamental as so many derby hats without bands, are yet made by the Ziegfeld stratagem to slide agreeably into the eye. The grotesque dancing of one Frisco remains the stellar event of the roof show. This pantaloon is the most comical toe-shaker it has ever been my privilege to see. If I were a rich man, I would hire him to dance once a day before at least four or five of the theatrical reviewers of New York, that they might learn, in time, to laugh and, laughing, learn to take music shows a trifle less seriously than the Greek drama and the war.

III

Or the May bills of the three so-called little theater groups of New York, the Washington Square Players, the Greenwich Village Players and the Provincetown Players, that of the last was the most interesting. The Washington Square Players appear in late months to have been seized with an imaginative meningitis; their programs have exposed an increasingly poor judgment; their methods of staging have become largely a mere patterning after the fallow Broadway formulæ. The first play on their May bill, Mr. Elmer Reizenstein's "Home of the Free," was merely an amateurish corruption of Hermann Bahr's "Children"

(credit unacknowledged). That it should have been given a place on the program when the Players had in their possession and at their disposal Mr. Eugene O'Neill's excellent "Moon of the Caribbees" would seem to indicate clearly that the discrimination of the organization has fallen upon disordered days. The second play, Brighouse's "Lonesome Like," and the third, Wilde's "Salome," were both already and long familiar, and so further give tongue to a lapse in the Players' exploratory interest. The staging of "Salome" brought nothing by way of freshness and the company of professionals appearing in the work as guests of the amateurs gave in the main a typical Rialto performance rich in the customary bellowings, grunts, eye-rollings and hip wobble-wabbles.

Good one-act plays, true enough, are not altogether easy to find, but a more engaging program than this was certainly available. Aside from the O'Neill play alluded to, a play of rare tropic atmosphere and genuine dramatic value, the Players might to vastly greater advantage have produced such currently obtainable pieces as Belford Forrest's "Lost Sheep," Romain Coolus' "Mirette Has Her Reasons," Dunsany's "Tents of the Arabs," Randolph Bartlett's "Three Like Papa" or "The Respective Virtues of Héloïse and Maggie," Joseph Conrad's "Simoom," one of Felix Salten's "Point of View" sketches, John Palmer's "Over the Hills," Edward Ellis' "Sacrifice, or A Night at the Guignol" (expurgated), Turgeniev's two-act play, "The Bread of Others," Mencken's "The Artist," Brighouse's "Price of Coal," a revival of Harold Chapin's little-known "The Dumb and the Blind," John Chapin Mosher's "Sauce for the Emperor," Zoe Akins' "Such a Charming Young Man" or "Did It Really Happen?" Jules Renard's "Good-bye," Harlan Thompson's "Pants and the Man," Richard Florance's little burlesque "It," or Anatole France's "Au Petit Bonheur." Shaw's latest one-acter, produced several months ago in London

and satirizing the Russians, is, I understand, also available; so, too, they tell me, is Tom Barry's old vaudeville sketch "Nick Carter," which, with a bit of rewriting and polishing up, might be made into a genuinely droll thing. These are but a few little plays I recall offhand as being nicely suited to the precise kind of stage the Washington Square people seek to serve. They are all of them easily to be found and quite simple in the matter of presentation. And they are, if not all impeccable, yet all of a vastly fresher content and more adroit treatment than the stale shoots which the Players have lately vouchsafed their public.

The Greenwich Village Players suffer from distinctly poor direction. When, as recently, they get hold of a meritorious play like O'Neill's "Ile," they promptly ruin it by performing upon it an almost inconceivable hocus-pocus. This O'Neill play, as readers of the SMART SET may recall, pictures the overpowering monotony, the interminable gray, of the cold seas, and the reactions of a whaling ship captain's wife to the environment forced by the man upon her. Without the atmosphere vital to the picture—"one of those gray days of calm," read the stage directions, "when ocean and sky are alike dead—the silence unbroken except for the measured tread of someone walking up and down on the poop deck overhead—the time one o'clock in the afternoon"—without this atmosphere, the whole effect of the play topples and goes to pieces. Imagine, then, a system of direction which, for some unintelligible reason, shifts the time of the action to twilight and throws a lot of warm pea-green light on the scene, thus achieving a pretty and by no means uncomfortable sense of incipient moonlit night and so deleting the play of the very thing upon which the body of its theme rests. This species of stage direction has been observable in much of the Greenwich Village Theater's dramatic effort, notably in Schnitzler's "The Big Scene" which formed a part of the last bill, and calls for an early

correction if the little institution hopes to accomplish anything.

The Provincetown Players compensate for excessively poor direction and even worse acting with the quality of their plays. Of all the New York little theater groups, these Provincetowners appear to have become the most discriminating in the selection of their one-acters. Some of these, to put it mildly, are of the adolescent ballismus and cheap Chianti school, but very few of them are without freshness of vision, freshness of touch, and a sincere essay to break into new dramatic ground. The last program consisted of Susan Glaspell's "Woman's Honor," Eugene O'Neill's "The Rope" and F. B. Kugelman's "The Hermit and His Messiah." Miss Glaspell's play is an amusingly original and witty satiric view of man's unquenchable passion to romanticize woman's spirituality, to woman's great esoteric snickering. The little piece is somewhat unduly spun out, but its humours are extremely refreshing. Mr. O'Neill's play, while considerably below his high level, is yet a good piece of dramatic writing setting forth the character of a demented miser. This O'Neill, as I have often observed, is a man of striking ability, the most striking, indeed, that has come the way of the American theater in some years. His first full-length play, "Beyond the Horizon," which will doubtless be produced within the next year, chances already to have passed my eye in manuscript. It is coloured with a vivid imagination, a sense of the affianced bitter and sweet of life, and, at times, a flash of the lightning of the true artist. Its stage presentation promises a worthwhile evening. The Kugelman opus does not call for comment. The exception to the Provincetowners' rule, it is bad Grand Guignol badly done.

IV

IN "Belinda," which Miss Barrymore recently exhibited at the Empire, Mr. A. A. Milne has attempted the Clare Kummer sort of thing. But neither the

Milne humours nor the Milne viewpoint are equal to the enterprise. These humours are for the most part made up of such familiar laugh-snaring stratagems as mentioning love and lamb chops in the same breath, and this viewpoint is vastly less that of eyes that have looked upon the world than that of eyes that have looked upon the theater of H. V. Esmond, Cicely Hamilton and Gertrude Jennings. To the composition of even the most artificial of farce comedies, an intrinsic sense of touch and go with life is patently essential. This, Mr. Milne at no time reveals. And the result is a play that is artificial not in the intentional and appropriate sense, but one that is artificial in the sense of a street-light left unwittingly to burn after dawn. Miss Barrymore's admirable technical skill is here completely thrown away.

Mr. Henry Miller's revival of Sydney Grundy's adaptation of the Dumas play known as "A Marriage of Convenience" was as satisfying to the eye as it was unsatisfying to the ear. Both costumes and settings were of a very fresh and lovely order. The play, on the other hand, disclosed itself at this late day as of a piece with the outmoded theater whose dénouements were manufactured out of parental photographs secreted in lockets, peculiar birthmarks, the proof that the marriage was legal, and the surrender of General Lee.

V

Nor the least diverting thing about Mr. Arthur Hopkins' Ibsen season, concluded a few weeks ago, was the attitude of the newspaper reviewers toward the manner in which the producer presented the various plays in the repertoire. The facts deduced by the reviewers were facts, and as such beyond dispute; but the arguments advanced in support of these facts and the processes of reasoning whereby they were achieved were, to say the least, of a high drollery. That the productions of "The Wild Duck," "Hedda Gabler" and "A Doll's House" were in striking

opposition to Mr. Hopkins' theory of so-called "unconscious projection," the reviewers, with an almost electric perspicacity, were uniformly successful, and correct, in explaining. But that this striking contradiction resulted arbitrarily in the misconceived and ineffective productions, a theory which certain of the reviewers established with like eloquence, was ratiocination of a weak and baroque kidney—and this despite the undeniable fact that the productions, at numerous points, were actually possessed of all the faults which the reviewers claimed for them.

In the first place, the Ibsen productions named were at odds with Mr. Hopkins' theory of "unconscious projection" for the very simple reason (to be encountered on page 24 of the small book wherein the producer sets forth his theory) that the theory in point is regarded by him as inapplicable to the production of the Ibsen plays, and drama of related nature.

And in the second place, the comparative misconception and ineffectiveness of the productions in point were doubtless due, not, as the reviewers somewhat paradoxically maintained, to the latter's striking contradiction of Mr. Hopkins' theory (never advanced), but rather to the fact that Mr. Hopkins approached the productions (see the same page in the same book) with apparently no definitely worked out theory for them either to strikingly contradict or strikingly coincide with.

Thus, the productions proved wanting not because they sat upon this theoretical stool or that, but because they sat, as it were, in the air between. Here and there, and notably in the presentation of "The Wild Duck," excellent discernment reared its head; but in the main a clear producing tactic was miss-

ing. Again, the grotesque Nazimova would discolour any such tactic, however lucid. It is the tragedy of all theories of production, however sound, that they must face actors. Nevertheless, I should like to have seen Miss Fenwick do Hedvig and Nora. So far as the performance of Hedda is concerned, Nazimova might be challenged even with George Bickel.

VI

LATER in May, the Washington Square Players, appearing to realize the superior manuscript discernment of the Provincetown amateurs, took two leaves out of the latter's book and brought uptown O'Neill's "The Rope," together with a one-act piece called "Close the Book," by the Provincetowner responsible for "Woman's Honor." To the Players' misfortune, however, "Close the Book" proved to be Miss Glaspell at her most tedious. Here again, therefore, the Players erred in not selecting the other Glaspell play.

VII

"THE KISS BURGLAR," by the Messrs. Glen Macdonough and Raymond Hubbell, is still another music show the value of which is considerably impaired by the effort to set forth a story too coherently. The result of this effort, here as generally, is the interlarding of the entertainment with gobs of plotty prattle that, like so many traffic policemen, hold up the movement of the show at most inopportune moments. Remove two-thirds of this plot dialogue and fill in the holes with music, girls and a couple of low comedians, and a doubly amusing evening would be forthcoming.



THE PUBLIC PRINTS

By H. L. Mencken

I
OF all the literate arts and crafts journalism seems to have the most meagre literature; even writing for the moving-pictures, though it is still in diapers, can show twice as many text-books and treatises. There is not even a presentable history of the American newspaper, for the late Frederic Hudson's work, which is excellent so far as it goes, stops with the year 1872, and the newspaper, it must be plain, has passed through more changes since that time than during the four centuries preceding. As for technical books, laying down the principles and practise of the editorial rooms, they are both very scarce and very bad. Nearly all of them are the product, not of active newspaper men who know what they are talking about, but of fly-blown editorial writers turned into professors of journalism, or of theorizing *Privatdozenten* in remote and highly Baptist "universities." Back in the nineteenth century, as a young reporter ambitious to shine, I studied "Steps Into Journalism," by Edwin L. Shuman, then of the *Chicago Tribune*. It was feeble enough stuff, God knows, and I got very little out of it, but to this day it remains the best book in its field. Not all the bombastic faculties of all the schools of journalism, posturing before the chautauquas in their doctoral gowns, have put forth anything better, nor even anything so good.

Why newspaper men write so little about their own profession is a problem that has often puzzled me. The notion that they haven't the time is nonsensical, for they are forever writ-

ing books on other subjects. It is, indeed, hard to find an American journalist above the rank of police reporter who hasn't written at least one book. Nor is it a fact that there is no public for professional treatises. On the contrary, the few that exist are very widely read, and even if actual newspaper men disdained them there would still be a large sale for them among the innumerable youngsters who aspire to journalistic careers. The true cause of the dearth, I suspect, lies in the fact that the gentlemen of the press, as a class, are an unreflective and unanalytical lot—that they seldom give any sober thought to the anatomy and physiology of the business of their lives. That business, indeed, holds them by its very conditions in a state of mind which is the opposite of the analytical. They enter upon it romantically, and when the romance is gone they go along wearily and unthinkingly. It is a trade that uses men up, especially mentally. That is to say, it is a trade that makes them stupid. The old journalist, allowing everything for his gigantic accumulation of useless knowledge, is nine times out of ten an ignorant and muddle-headed fellow, unfit for anything save keeping to his rut. His mind is a storehouse of ancient (and usually inaccurate) labels and rubber stamps. To think anything out for himself, clearly and vigorously, is quite beyond him.

Part of the blame for this mental deadening falls upon the unescapable conditions of the craft. It makes such heavy demands upon the wits, it insists upon so high a degree of aliveness, that it is no wonder that, once the

bounce of youth is gone, a man begins to rely upon formulæ. To be forty years old and the city editor, say, of an afternoon paper is almost as impossible as to be sixty years old and a star base-runner. The only way for a man in that boat to navigate it at all is for him to transform himself into a sort of automatic machine—that is, to throw overboard reflection and trust to mere reaction. He simply cannot think fast enough for the job; it asks for a younger man, still full of gas and folly, still bare of caution and conscience. In brief, the whole thing is a young man's adventure, like marrying or going to war. Once youth has been used up, and with it its resilience, there ensues a fossilization exactly like that which all the world notes in elderly military gentlemen and in men long broken to marriage. The typical newspaper man of discreet years may be likened to an unfortunate who married his best girl at twenty-one and has lived through disillusionment and disgust and a wondering self-searching, and has finally taken refuge behind a fear to think about it at all.

So much for what is inherent, and probably unavoidable. The way out, perhaps, is to retire at thirty, or to slide a razor across the carotids at forty. But on top of this there are influences quite outside the man himself, and even outside the legitimate constitution of the craft. Those influences, I believe, are a good deal more complex than they are ordinarily made out to be. It is common to describe them by saying, simply, that the editorial room is now in bondage to the business office—that newspapers are now run, not to propagate ideas, but to make money. But that is neither quite accurate, nor quite the whole story. The trouble with the newspapers of America, taking one with another, is not that they are run fundamentally to make money, but that they are run by men who already have money, and want something else. And the trouble with the working newspaper man is not that the business office attacks him by frontal assault and tyr-

anny, but that he is destroyed by an infinitely subtle sapping and mining. In all other professions a man's security grows greater as he gains in age and experience. In journalism alone his position grows more precarious. Thus menaced from above by powers and purposes that are at odds with his professional pride and integrity, and that he often cannot even understand, and from below by a younger generation that presses harder every day, it is no wonder that he commonly degenerates into a timorous and platitudinous fellow, his thoughts more and more concentrated upon mere self-preservation, and the fine frenzies and gallantries of his youth swallowed up by a hollow capacity for whatever is cheap, and easy, and safe.

Well, what is to be done about it? I'm sure I don't know. I merely describe a disease; I do not propose a remedy. One of the primary difficulties lies in the fact that entrance into journalism is almost as facile as entrance into jail. No equipment is required—not even a sound education. Nine-tenths of the recruits who come in, of course, turn out to be incompetents, but it is precisely the pressure of these incompetents that makes the man above insecure. Perhaps the schools of journalism, now flourishing so prodigiously, will raise the existing standards a bit, if only by making actual literacy a requirement. But I doubt it. All they will probably accomplish will be to make the younger generation more sure-footed and hence more exigent. Nor do I see any way to get the control of newspapers out of the hands of the devious fellows who now gobble them one by one. A rich man wants to get on in politics, or he seeks a way to protect his business, or he has social ambitions, or he is moved by some vague yearning to exert power and be somebody. Well, he has the money and it is a free country. What are you going to do about it? The answer lies in the plain facts. You are not going to do anything about it. It is happening every day. In every large Ameri-

can city at least half (and sometimes all) of the newspapers are now owned and dominated by men who have other interests, and whose other interests are a great deal more tender and precious in their sight than the business of telling what has happened in the world, fairly and completely, and of interpreting it frankly and fearlessly.

II

ALL of which leads me, blowing my nose sadly, to two late tomes: "The Profession of Journalism," by a herd of journalists under command of Prof. Dr. Willard Grosvenor Bleyer, a gifted pedagogue of Wisconsin (*Atlantic Monthly Press*), and "Northcliffe: Britain's Man of Power," by William E. Carson (*Dodge*). The latter is a highly flattering and even oleaginous work: Dr. Carson depicts Northcliffe as one of the most praiseworthy of existing mammals. This business, of course, involves a certain amount of soft pedalling. The atrocious badness of most of the Northcliffe publications is scarcely mentioned, nor is there any detailed and accurate account of the noble lord's adventures in politics, particularly before the war. But the book, nevertheless, is instructive and worth reading, for it obviously depicts Northcliffe very much as he sees himself, and there is high entertainment in gazing into the recesses of so gargantuan and puissant a personality. The man is almost archaic in his might and daring—a medieval baron come to life again. I often see him compared to Hearst, especially by his enemies. As well compare the Matterhorn to a load of cinders. He is, in fact, equal to a whole drove of Hearsts. Nor is Roosevelt his peer, nor any other American I can think of. He is, in fact, the sole creature of his species in Christendom today; no other private individual has a hundredth of his power. And how did he get it? He got it by printing magazines and newspapers of the most imbecile type, and by circulating them in the fashion of Barnum and Munyon.

He got it by playing cynically and magnificently upon the stupidity and emotionability of the least intelligent—by pulling the public ear. . . . What the moral is, God knows!

"The Profession of Journalism," as I say, is a composite. Various journalists and pseudo-journalists discuss the thing, chiefly lugubriously—among them, Rollo Ogden, Oswald Garrison Villard, Melville E. Stone, Henry Waterson, Francis E. Leupp and two or three anonymous blabbers. I myself have a chapter in the book, and following it there is a counterblast to it by Ralph Pulitzer, of the *New York World*. Diligently studying this counterblast for the second time—it first appeared, like my chapter, in the *Atlantic Monthly* during 1914—I am set in my conviction that I made my allegations, not too gaudy, but too mild. All I can find in my discourse is a platitude—to wit, that the grand moral frenzy of newspapers is chiefly buncombe—that their true motive, nine times out of ten, is not to purge the republic of sin, but merely to give a hot show, stir up the animals, and so make circulation.

The truth is that this crusading business is one of the worst curses of journalism, and perhaps the main enemy of that fairness and accuracy and intelligent purpose which should mark the self-respecting newspaper. It trades upon one of the sorriest weaknesses of man—the desire to see the other fellow jump. It is at the heart of that Puritanical frenzy, that obscene psychic sadism, which is our national vice. No newspaper, carrying on a crusade against a man, ever does it fairly and decently; not many of them even make the pretense. On the contrary, they always do it extravagantly and cruelly, pursuing him with dishonest innuendo, denying him his day in court, seeking to intimidate his friends. The practice, I believe, is disastrous to newspapers, and to newspaper men. The fact that they fight behind breastworks, against an enemy who can't strike back, makes poltroons of them. That sort of thing is not war; it is lynching—and

lynching is surely no sport for men presumably of honor. In particular, the effects are evil when the men told off for the enterprise do not believe in it, which is much oftener than the public imagines.

I speak here, not as a moralist preaching an impossible ethic, but as one who has engaged in such doings at length, and without hypocritical regrets. I was once employed, in fact, as a specialist in invective by a newspaper proprietor who had formidable enemies to dispose of, and I naturally augmented the stock company of victims by adding a few persons whom I disliked myself. But when I get to hell I shall be at least able to file two caveats against my incineration—one that I signed my name to every line I wrote, and was physically and financially responsible for all stretchers, and the other that I gave every aggrieved man, absolutely without condition, full liberty to strike back in my own paper, at any length and in any terms. These counterblasts often filled double the space of my own fancies. Moreover, they had just as much display. Yet more, they were printed promptly. The result was a combat that kept a certain plain fairness, even when it was most violent. Nobody was stabbed in the back. Nobody was denied his day in court. Sometimes I got the better of it, and sometimes I got a good pummeling. The gallery was pleased in both cases.

A banal story, to be sure. What is the point? The point is that, so far as I know, there is not a single newspaper in the whole United States today that offers any such fair play to its opponents—that not a single one of them, to the best of my knowledge and belief, has a fixed rule, publicly known and invariable, allowing an aggrieved man to state his defense in his own terms. I say "in his own terms." What I mean especially is in terms of countercharge. Such a rule, if general in America, would expose and ruin literally scores of newspapers. And some of them would be big ones, and influential ones, and vociferously virtuous ones.

III

Of the late fiction the best is on tap in "Nocturne," by Frank Swinnerton (*Doran*), and particularly in Chapter XI thereof. This chapter is praised by H. G. Wells in an introduction to the book, and with good cause: it is, in fact, an admirable piece of writing. The rest of the story, however, is surely not up to the gorgeous encomiums that Wells lavishes on it. He calls it, for example, "a book that will not die," and says that "it ranks Swinnerton as Master." With the highest veneration, Pish! What we have here is not criticism, but log-rolling, and it is almost as unblushing as that which Irvin Cobb and his friends do for one another on this side of the water. The truth is that the book is excellently contrived, but that it has one or two soft spots. For one thing, Alf Rylett's transfer of his affections from Jenny Blanchard to her sister Emmy is just a bit too facile to be quite credible. For another—but let this quarrelling with Wells be done. He smears the lily with too much gilt, but it is a lily none the less.

In the other fiction that has reached me there is a good deal of flat and shabby stuff. The book of "Nine Humorous Tales," by Anton Chekhov, translated by Dr. Isaac Goldberg and Henry T. Schnittkind (*Stratford*), is doubly bad, for on the one hand the stories are intrinsically feeble and on the other hand the translations are full of clumsiness. It is difficult to believe that Dr. Goldberg actually had anything to do with certain of these extraordinarily inept Englishings, for example, that of "Vengeance." Imagine a Russian story in which, at the very climax, the central character reaches into a package and pulls out "two brand-new one-hundred-dollar bills." Or in which he addresses his foes as slob, lobster, pinhead and wooden-headed meal-ticket! Here the learned translator, in his effort to be colloquial, has managed only to be absurd. After all, even a reader of Chekhov may be safely presumed to know that the Russians use,

not dollars, but rubles, and that they have idioms of their own, in objugation as in other fields of fancy. Part of the pleasure of reading a foreign literature lies in making acquaintance with just such exotic twists of speech, homely and sublime. To destroy them in translation is to destroy half the color, and hence half the charm of the original. Suppose the oriental tropes of the Bible were done into the metaphors of Longacre square or the Harvard campus: who, then, would care to read Proverbs? Dealing with slang, which is merely metaphor in embryo, the translator should avoid paraphrase whenever possible, and particularly such paraphrase as suggests familiar and conflicting ideas. The excellent translations of Hauptmann by Dr. Ludwig Lewisohn are often damaged by his failure to observe this. Instead of translating the rich and characteristic slang of Berlin he substitutes an artificial slang made up of borrowings from Sam Weller and Chimmie Fadden, and the result is often a killing unreality. Dreiser, in "A Traveler at Forty," showed a surer instinct. He translated *Schweinhund*, not by slob, or louse, or lobster, or any other discordant Americanism, but by pig-dog. The epithet was strange, but its very strangeness helped his picture.

But the worst demerits of these nine tales are intrinsic. They are, indeed, extremely elemental in structure and crude in working out; most of them are little more than second-rate anecdotes, poorly told. There are at least fifty writers in America who could do better, and who prove it by doing it regularly. That such hollow pieces are "classics" of Russian literature, as the translators certify, is but one more evidence of what I have often preached in this place: that a good deal of Russian literature, at least of the later schools, is balderdash, and that the current craze for it is based upon unsound judgment. I estimate it, of course, by translations, but then so do the majority of its most feverish admirers. It offers a few very fine works. It offers

a lot of stuff that is at least up to the best of our second-raters, say, Arnold Bennett and Mrs. Wharton. But it also offers a great mass of amateurish and obvious fiction, far below the most ordinary English or even American standard. Why such pishposh should be laboriously clawed into English and done into books is more than I can make out. It is bringing to Newcastle, not coals, but kindling wood; at all events in the field of the short story. For every truly first-rate Russian short story that any gentleman in the house will produce, I shall be glad to produce at least twenty, all by living Americans, that are quite as good, and at least ten that are undeniably better. And if I fail, then I promise to drink well-water for a solid and horrible month.

The new novels in American are better than this worst of Chekhov, but that is not saying that they leap very high. Both "On the Stairs," by Henry B. Fuller (*Houghton*), and "The House of Conrad," by Elias Tobenkin (*Stokes*), are experiments that do not quite come off. It is Mr. Fuller's aim, as he explains in a preface, to write a novel in less space than is commonly devoted to the business. He has skill and experience of a very respectable order; no other American novelist of today, indeed, has given the craft more sober consideration, or contributed more of value to its theory and practise. But all he accomplishes here is to furnish unwilling proofs that there must be some use and necessity, after all, for the grand garrulity of Bennett, Moore, Dreiser, Conrad, de Morgan and company, not to mention Thackeray, Dickens, Zola and Balzac. A novel, it appears, simply refuses to get itself into tights; it needs space, air, room to manœuvre. The effects aimed at in "On the Stairs," I daresay, might have been achieved by a series of disconnected pictures; Galsworthy has tried the experiment, and with a good deal of success, in "The Dark Flower." But a continuous narrative, stripped of the details we are used to, reveals bareness, and, what is worse, lack of plaus-

ibility. Neither Raymond Prince nor John W. McComas, in this fundamentally sound and interesting tale of Chicago, is quite accounted for. The one seems pulled down the stairs by strings, and the other seems helped up. Both function just a bit too neatly and mechanically. And so do all the lesser folks of the tale. Speeded up, they stiffen to marionettes. . . . But it is pleasant, certainly, to see Mr. Fuller return to the novel, if only to perform an autopsy upon it.

"The House of Tobenkin" is an ambitious work, ruined by the sentimentality of the author. What he sets out to do is to show how the spirit of America penetrates the immigrant and turns him into a new man, with new ideals and a new outlook upon the world. Gottfried Conradi comes to the New World a Lassalean Socialist, full of ready-made cures for all the sorrows of the world. His son degenerates into a labor leader. His grandson, proceeding still further from the general to the particular, becomes a farmer in California, content to uplift himself and his alone. So far, we have a sound idea, of no little ironical voltage. But Mr. Tobenkin destroys all its value by working it out in terms of conventional sentiment. That is to say, he reduces it to such banality that it is hailed by newspaper reviewers as affecting and inspiring. If you want to see how a genuinely competent novelist handles such a theme, take my advice of month before last and read "The Rise of Davis Levinsky," by Abraham Cahan. The difference is that between a feeble and artificial tract, unconvincing in almost every detail, and a living and brilliant work of art.

"The Stucco House," by Gilbert Cannan (*Doran*), is frankly beyond me; I give it up in despair, quite unable to dredge up any interest in its people. Mr. Cannan is one of the most esteemed of the younger English novelists. So sound a judge as W. L. George puts him among the seven of largest promise, along with D. H. Lawrence, Compton Mackenzie, Oliver

Onions, Frank Swinnerton, E. M. Forster and J. D. Beresford. As for me, I put George himself ahead of all of them. Cannan I cannot read; he is one of my blind spots; I find the best of his work as dull as Lawrence's "The Rainbow." Nor can I read John Buchan, author of "Prester John" (*Doran*); he makes, to my taste, very thin soup of the drying bones of Robert Louis Stevenson. Nor have I anything very inviting to report about "The Boardman Family," by Mary S. Watts (*Macmillan*), the composition of a novelist of skill, but surely not her best. Nor about "The House of Whispers," by William Johnston (*Little-Brown*). Nor about "Flood Tide," by Daniel Chase (*Macmillan*).

Joseph Hergesheimer bids us to his second table in "Gold and Iron" (*Knopf*), a collection of three novellettes. They represent, so to speak, the by-products of his business as a novelist; in the second of them, "Tubal Cain," it is easy to discern certain materials that were obviously gathered for "The Three Black Pennys." All three were first printed in a magazine of enormous circulation, and it would be easy to blame their defects upon the exigencies of that market. But the truth is that where they are thin it is not with the thinness of the popular magazine story; it is not that they are too obvious, but that they are a bit too shadowy. Two of them, "Wild Oranges" and "Tubal Cain," present protagonists who somehow fail to convince. Why should John Woolfolk immolate himself as he does after his wife's tragic death? And why having endured his floating monastery so long, should he react so romantically to Millie Stope's pale beauty and moving-picture peril? And by what process, precisely, is the dull, incompetent Alexander Hulings of Eastlake converted into the herculean figure of the iron country? The thing happens, but just how? . . . The reader's refuge is in the last story, "The Dark Fleece"—in the main a capital piece of writing. Here there are no uneasy questionings. The thing unrolls

itself clearly; it is plausible and penetrating. And Honora Canderay, in more than one way, is the best woman that Hergesheimer has yet got into a book.

Various books of merit: "Literary Chapters," by W. L. George (*Little-Brown*); "Shandygaff," by Christopher Morley (*Doubleday*); "Two Children in Old Paris," by Gertrude Slaughter (*Macmillan*); "A Boswell of Baghdad," by E. V. Lucas (*Doran*). A hortatory purpose gets into and corrupts the George book: he draws up solemn lists of best and second-best novels for the newly intellectual. But that, after all, is but a blemish upon an otherwise very satisfactory volume. As I said a moment ago, I think George is the ablest of all the younger English novelists. His "The Making of an Englishman," indeed, is quite equal to anything done by the older men, forgetting only Conrad, Hardy and Moore. Here, braving all the dangers that are said to lie in the discussion of contemporaries, he sets forth his professional view of his chief rivals, and the result is a book full of excellent criticism. And to top it are several chapters of more generalized discussion, including one dealing at length with comstockery in England.

"Shandygaff" is a literary nonesuch—criticism, burlesque, travel, philosophy, sentiment, even sentimentality. The criticism, I lament to report, is not marked by any very hard and arctic impartiality; on the contrary, it is frankly friendly. But that very fact, in a way, is the cause of the charm of the book, for in place of the usual professorial bombast we have here the intimate and unashamed enthusiasms of a fellow with actual ideas in his head, both good ones and bad ones. Instead of trying to teach something, to exhibit his wisdom, to pop the eyes of sophomores, he lights a corn-cob pipe, sends the waiter for a couple of vases of *Helles*, loosens his collar, and unloads his confidences. This Morley, yet so young that he reads De Quincey and

praises Christian monogamy, is a genuine original, and will make a brave fight of it before ever the national Presbyterianism engulfs him. As I have hinted in these refined pages in the past, a sort of dual personality appears in him. By day he is an assistant editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, in charge of the departments of home missions, moving-picture stars, military knitting and sex hygiene, but of evenings, I suspect, his eye flirts with Rabelais. If he doesn't do some capital books later on, then I guess with even more than customary imbecility.

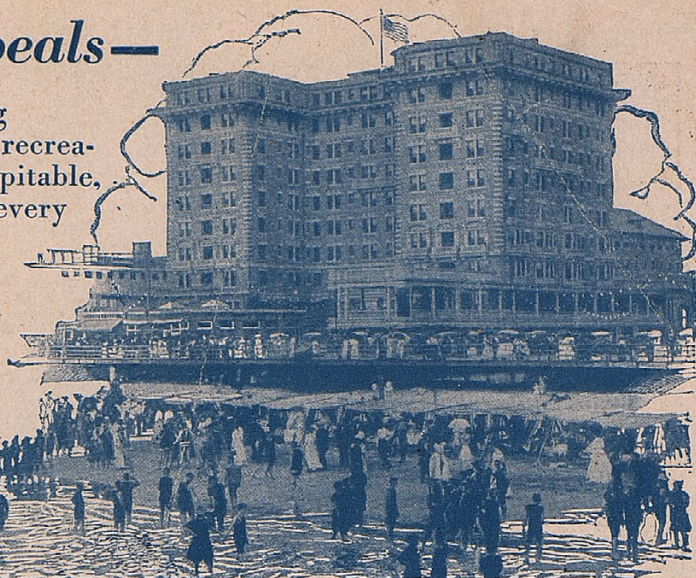
"Two Children in Old Paris" and "A Boswell of Baghdad" I won't go into at length. The first deals with the Paris of the far-off, half-fabulous days before the war, and with the doings of two little Americans at school there; the second, somewhat like "Shandygaff," is a hodge-podge of essays, sketches and criticisms, all light and agreeable. Of the books remaining, the most interesting is "The Negro in Literature and Art," by Benjamin Brawley (*Duffield*), a competent account of what various colored Americans have done in literature, painting, sculpture, music and oratory, and on the stage. It is a useful book, accurate and sensible. The others in hand are chiefly very stupid. In "The Art of Photoplay Making" (*Macmillan*) Victor O. Freeburg delivers himself of nearly three hundred pages of platitudes. In "National Miniatures" (*Knopf*) some anonymous contributor to the *Nation* attempts brief portraits of various Great Thinkers of the republic, ranging from Pitchfork Tillman to the Rev. Dr. Henry Van Dyke; all are flat and uninforming. In "Just a Minute!" (*Stewart-Kidd*) the Rev. Dr. Charles Frederic Goss coos and gurgles in the manner of a Y. M. C. A. secretary. And in "The Great Thousand Years" (*Jones*) Ralph Adams Cram renews his now familiar plea for a revival of the medieval spirit. Nietzsche comes in for the usual ear-pulling, and his name, as always, is misspelled.

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